

BALLADS & OTHER POEMS

W. FREELAND



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BALLADS AND OTHER POEMS

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Ballads & other Poems

By the late

William Freeland

Author of "A Birth Song and other Poems"

"Love and Treason—A Romance"

With Memoir

By

Henry Johnston

Glasgow

James MacLehose and Sons

Publishers to the University

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NOTE

By request of Mr. Freeland's Trustees the Poems in this Volume have been selected and prepared for the Press by Henry Johnston and William Wallace, LL.D.



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MEMOIR

IN a letter from Elgin in 1868, the subject of this Memoir wrote me: "Your visit to Smith's grave (Alexander Smith, author of the *Life Drama*, etc.) was natural and characteristic of you, and whether *I* publish a book or not I shall expect you to visit my grave also—and what is more, write my elegy." Add to this the irresistible importunity of friends, an intimate and unbroken companionship of over forty years, and my warrant for undertaking to write these introductory pages is stated.

There are few episodes in the quiet life of William Freeland for a biography—an elegy was all he himself desired—but a simple record of what he was and what he achieved, of the honourable strenuousness of his career and his generous helpfulness to others, will, I think, tend to strengthen our regard for his memory.

Kirkintilloch, for its size, seems to compare favourably with other towns in the matter of its poets. David Gray, author of *The Luggie*; Walter Watson, known as the writer of the song, *We've aye been provided for*; David Buchanan, James Slimmon, author of *The*

Dead Planet; and William Freeland, author of *A Birth Song and other Poems*, were all associated by birth or residence with this uninteresting though somewhat picturesque town. Here Freeland was born on 23rd March, 1828. Being in humble circumstances, and having other children to maintain, his parents could not give him a liberal education. He was put in possession, however, of the key which unlocks all knowledge—he was taught to read, and probably had acquaintance with some of the other branches of education generally taught in a country school. From the evidence of one of his school-fellows, young Freeland was very shy and seldom engaged in boyish games; neither in class nor in playground was he in any way distinguished. School life, however, was soon over, and he was apprenticed to the art of block-cutting in Bellfield Print Works; afterwards he removed to Glasgow, where he was employed in the establishment of Henry Monteith & Co., Bridgeton. Much as he loved art, he loved literature more. In his brief hours of leisure after the ordinary work of the day was over, he attended evening classes in the Glasgow Athenæum, and studied diligently the best models of general literature in private. He was a voracious reader of poetry, ranging from Homer to Wordsworth. Shakespeare was his supreme teacher, but the influence of Byron was also apparent in his later writings. Poetry was his passion, but the stern necessities of practical life led him into journalism. Certain of his verses attracted the notice of Mr., afterwards Dr., James

Hedderwick, proprietor and editor of the *Glasgow Citizen*, a man of high literary taste, an accomplished journalist, and a poet himself of no mean order. The sub-editorship of the paper became vacant by the retiral of Hugh Macdonald, well known as the author of *Rambles Round Glasgow*, *Days at the Coast*, etc. The appointment was offered to young Freeland, who accepted it with diffident eagerness.

It was shortly after this period that I, as a juvenile contributor to the *Citizen*, made the acquaintance of the new sub-editor. I remember his striking personality even then—medium height, with keen but kindly grey eyes and a pale dome-like brow surmounted and surrounded by a great luxuriance of fair curly hair. His manner was genial, and his converse on literary matters critical but encouraging. David Gray and William Black, the novelist, were regular contributors to the *Citizen* at that time. Although David Gray, or “Will Gurney” as he signed himself, was born in Kirkintilloch, he and Freeland met for the first time in the house of the latter in the east end of Glasgow in 1859. Gray was Freeland’s junior by ten years, but having literary impulses and ambitions in common, they soon became closely attached friends. Gray had extravagant dreams of literary achievement, inspired by the stirrings of conscious power. He dared to prophesy he would yet be Laureate of England and have his honoured bones laid in Westminster Abbey. Freeland’s sympathies went forth to the youthful dreamer, but prudence, acquired from wider experience,

cautioned control of inordinate ambition. Poor Gray's career was pathetic and short. His adventure to London with Robert Buchanan in 1860 brought on an illness, under which he returned to his home at Merkland to die. Freeland made frequent and welcome visits to the invalid after his clandestine escape from Torquay, where he had been placed for restorative purposes by generous friends. "Only a few brief words," Gray wrote. "Come soon. It is hard to say, but death presses. That silly book (*The Luggie*) is my only wish here below next to life ; write and come ; but oh, that you were living with me, how much happier, how much braver !" Again (30th September, 1860), "My dream is about to be fulfilled ; my book is to be printed. Through the kindness of Sydney Dobell do I anticipate this pleasure. He says by the time my MSS. are ready the printer will be waiting for them. Pray, then, look very carefully over the crude, unmethodical rhymes, marking with your pencil anything you see false, weak, or unintelligible, and I shall be heartily grateful." Gray died on 3rd December, 1861, but *The Luggie*, which had been revised by his friend, was published through the influence of Sydney Dobell and Marian James,¹ the novelist.

¹This lady wrote to Gray four days before his death : "My dear Mr. Gray, I have heard from Mr. Macmillan this morning. He speaks highly of the poem, and expresses his readiness to undertake its publication. He says the MS. will form a volume like *Edwin of Deira*, and the enclosed is a specimen page, sent with the printer's estimate. I cannot resist the impulse to send it on to you, because I think it will give you so much pleasure to

Gray saw the first page in type just as he was dying. This he sent on to Freeland with an extravagant dedication, ending in these words: "Before I enter that nebulous, uncertain land of shadowy notions and tremulous wonderings—standing on the threshold of the sun, and looking back, I cry to thee, O beloved! a last farewell, lingeringly, passionately, without tears." Thus passed away a true but over-impulsive son of genius, whose fate and memory ever held a reverent abiding place in Freeland's mind.

During the period of his sub-editorship of the *Glasgow Citizen* Freeland was a faithful and ardent worker in the interest of his paper; indeed, so strikingly apparent was this that one who knew him intimately remarked facetiously that "he wrote the whole newspaper, advertisements and all." Generous and sympathetic by nature he possessed an occult power of attracting youthful writers, some of whom afterwards attained

see even this small portion of your work already in the form in which I hope before long we may see it published.

"After Mr. Dobell's praise of your poetry you will hardly care for mine, yet I will say briefly that those sonnets which I found time to read before sending off the MSS. to Cambridge impressed me deeply with the truth and beauty and rare simplicity of pathos. It seems to me, too, that in your poetry, even the most mournful, there is a shining forth of that hopeful, loving faith in God's love which it is indeed a good thing for poets to teach, and which I earnestly trust is the abiding solace and rest of your own spirit.

"I only write these few lines now, but believe that I am always, with much sympathy,

"Sincerely your friend,

"MARIAN JAMES."

literary distinction. The secret of his influence may be illustrated in some measure by a few lines he took the trouble to write to one of his numerous contributors: "Your poem of Monday I have read with considerable pleasure. It looks better in type than it did in MS. The general structure of it is fair—the general finish is more than fair, and there are two or three individual passages that are first rate. It would, of course, be easy for me to take exception to several of its features, but I won't do so. It is enough to say simply that it will act as a *bridge to something better*." This encouraging treatment of any youthful effort that had promise in it was characteristic of the man. From among the many letters conveying grateful acknowledgments of his helpfulness in literary matters, I take the following from Charles Gibbon, author of *Robin Gray* and several other Scotch novels: "14th Dec., 1868. My delight was great this morning when I got your letter; it breathed so much of the old sympathy that gave me some of the first lifts onward, that it was like a gust of fresh wind from the mountains. I am sitting now in a picture gallery of memories of the old days when I used to be boring you with MSS. at the *Citizen* Office. I am thinking of how many kind, earnest hints I owe you, and almost wish that time would take a backward twist and let me know something of the old enthusiasms." Again, in a subsequent letter by the same writer: "Give me a chance soon to serve you, and see if I fail to seize the opportunity."

Notwithstanding the estimation in which the old *Weekly Citizen* was held, both as a newspaper and as a journal of fine literary quality, it, and many other weeklies, especially those in populous centres like Glasgow, were practically jostled out of existence by daily morning and evening papers. For a short period after leaving the *Citizen*, Freeland held a subordinate position on the *Glasgow Herald*, but in April, 1868, he was offered and accepted the editorship of the *Elgin and Morayshire Courier*. His stay in the North, however, was uncomfortable and brief, extending only over a few months.¹ At this time he had serious thoughts of trying his fortune in London. His old Glasgow friends, Robert Buchanan and William Black, then in the Metropolis, advanced arguments both for and against such an adventure. The latter wrote: "I hear of a Glasgow fellow who some months ago replied to an advertisement in the *Athenæum* for some essays. He is now on the strength of these here

¹Freeland's position in Elgin was one not only of discomfort but of uncertainty. On 2nd June, 1868, he wrote: "There is no sight of land—the open sea breaks more and more upon me, but in violent tempests the open sea is safer than firths and fiords." His depression at this time was deepened by the serious illness of one of his sons. On 17th June, 1868, I received the following: "The other day I got a cheering letter from home, in which I was informed that the little fellow had kept very cheery since I left. I don't know whether to regard this as symptomatic of some favourable change. I dare hardly hope so, though I pray that God may grant it. The boy is getting interlaced about my heart more and more, so that were he to die—as die he must some day—I should, I think, get my first sharp pang from Death."

with his wife and family earning £7 a week. This, of course, is a chance, but such advertisements do appear frequently in the *Athenæum*." While no man could be braver in the discharge of duty or in the defence of truth, Freeland was singularly timid when brought face to face with any personal crisis in which important resolutions had to be rapidly formed. The unnecessarily modest estimate of his own powers, and the increasing ties of family and home, held him back from the allurements of London. On returning to Glasgow he contributed articles and poems to various magazines and journals. Alexander Strahan, then proprietor of *Good Words* and other publications, accepted many of his poems. William Black, struggling into position himself, edited in succession the *London Magazine* and the *Examiner*, to both of which, during Black's editorship, Freeland contributed two or three articles weekly. He was also commissioned to write a serial story for the *Glasgow Weekly Herald*. During this time of uncertainty and depression his friend Black was a frequent and encouraging correspondent. In 1869 he wrote: "*Kilmeny* is just completed. How goes your story? . . . Be as condensed and dramatic as possible, avoiding eloquent descriptions which would puzzle the head of a Glasgow audience, and giving a good deal of dialogue. Don't be too profound or ornate or metaphysical. A bright, cheerful dramatic story you should aim at. The only danger with you will be that it will be too intellectual—in a word, too good for the readers of it."

In 1870, still referring to Freeland's story and to work he was doing for the *Examiner*, Black writes: "*Kilmeny* will be published in about a fortnight by Sampson, Low & Co. I am very well pleased with the book, which surprises me, when I remember that it was for some weeks a toss up as to whether *In Silk Attire* was to be committed to the flames or not. Going through the proofs of a book is fatal to your belief in it." The serial written by Freeland for the *Weekly Herald—Love and Treason*, a story of the Radical rising in the West of Scotland—was subsequently published in three volumes by Messrs. Tinsley Brothers. The book contained some strong and original characters, it also showed remarkable dramatic power, and on the whole, for a first venture in fiction, was cordially received.

In March, 1870, owing to the death of Mr. Pagan, editor of the *Glasgow Herald*, some rearrangements of the staff became necessary, and Freeland rejoined the paper as one of the sub-editors.

In April of the same year Black also accepted a commission to write a serial story for the *Weekly Herald*. "I am slowly elaborating some characters for the *Herald* story, which I intend to make entirely Scotch," he wrote to Freeland. "I have got hold of one or two situations which I fancy will be striking." This story, *A Daughter of Heth*, afterwards published anonymously,¹

¹Some of Black's previous books had been rather severely handled by the critics. The latter, however, were put off their guard by *A Daughter of Heth*, which was supposed to be the

proved a remarkable success. The discovery of Black as the anonymous author of *A Daughter of Heth* secured for him the immediate attention of publishers, who competed with each other for his work; moreover, it stimulated the demand for his previous books. This novel was followed by *The Strange Adventures of a Phaeton*, the first conception of which he communicated to his friend. "My proposal for holidays is to take a trap and drive from here (London) to Edinburgh and Glasgow and write a book about it, containing a thin line of fiction (more sentimental than comic, of course). Let me know how that strikes you." While lunching with him in London about this time, Black informed me that he had an offer from the editor of a magazine of £2,000 for the serial rights of his next novel, which, however, he could not accept, as it had previously been mortgaged to another. To his friend Freeland this sudden and remarkable leap into popularity afforded unbounded pleasure. Aided by his access of fortune Black had purchased a residence on Denmark Hill, which he thus describes: "It is a large, solidly built place—fifteen rooms, garden, stables, coach-house, etc., etc. I should like to see you installed here for a month in the summer, and thus share the spoil which I have won from the Philistines. *Don't* say that they were vanquished by the jaw-bone of an

work of an unknown writer. Referring to this matter, Black writes: "Have you seen the *Saturday* notice? That would never have appeared in that journal if they had known whose book they were criticising."

ass." In response to Freeland's congratulations Black wrote later, "We have just given our first party. We had seventy sitting down to supper in a marquee in the garden. Champagne and songs—but only one speech—from Macmillan. . . . The last carriage rolled off in the bright sunlight with the birds a-singing in the Grove. Kilmeny was there in blue and gold. And Bell had her brown ringlets flowing; and Queen Titania sat beside an old friend of Charlotte Brontë's, and the heroine of *The Monarch of Mincing Lane*—I forget her name—sent half the artists present mad about the loveliness of her face. But none of my villains were present. I have had to make them 'out of my own head,' as I confess I never saw a villain."

For a time Freeland edited the *Weekly Herald*, but when the *Evening Times* was started in 1876, he was appointed its acting editor and leader writer, retaining his connection with the *Herald* in the capacity of reviewer of poetry and verse. His leading articles in the *Evening Times* were a special feature of the paper—crisp, concise, embellished with fine poetic conceits, and, as a friendly critic phrased it, "shining all over with good things." His vocation was essentially that of a poet, and had the pressure of circumstances been less severe he might have realised his dreams of distinction as a votary of the Muse. Robert Buchanan, with whom, after David Gray's death, he kept up a close correspondence, wrote regarding one of Freeland's poems which had appeared in a London publication: "Your *Dawn* is excellent.

I do hope that all your time will not be occupied by newspaper drudgery. Whatever you do, leave a loop-hole through which to look at the stars." Again, referring to another poem: "*Reaping* is strong, terse, and musical. If you would only put together a little book of verse as good as *Reaping* and *Dawn* you would improve your position materially." Unfortunately the ceaseless grind of the daily paper left but few "loop-holes."

A circumstance in connection with one of the poems referred to by Buchanan afforded its author much gratification. Princess Beatrice, in compiling her beautifully illustrated *Birth-day Book*, paid him the high compliment of selecting for her title-page the last stanza of his poem *Reaping*. The verse is as follows:

To Spring comes the budding; to Summer the blush;
To Autumn the happy fruition;
To Winter repose, meditation, and hush;
But to man every season's condition:
He buds, blooms, and ripens, in action and rest,
As thinker, and actor, and sleeper;
Then withers and wavers, chin drooping on breast,
And is reaped by the hand of the reaper.

Though his own power of writing verse was hampered by his daily work, he took the deepest interest in all new emanations from the Parnassian fount. To a friend who had sent him what he characterised as "a serious if not a sacred piece of verse," he replied: "To write such poetry, let me tell you, is precisely the most difficult thing in the poetic domain. Not one in a

thousand can do it. In fact it requires a special faculty like the composition of songs. I ought to say like the effusing of songs—for lyrics like those of Burns and the best lyrists never seem to have been written at all, but to have flowed from golden lips, like streams that flow from heavenly fountains.”

In April, 1882, his *Birth Song and other Poems* was published by Messrs. James MacLehose & Sons, Glasgow. *The Investiture of the Hose* was the title at first intended for the volume, but on the suggestion of the publishers it was ultimately changed to the name by which the volume is known. In sending me the title-page and the introductory poem in type, the author wrote: “Read the lines with a loving and appreciative eye. Of course they are open to slaughter, but so are better things.” The book was warmly received both by the public and the press, and brought him, as I have reason to know, many hearty letters of congratulation, amongst others one from J. A. Froude, historian and biographer of Carlyle, which is of more than ephemeral interest. “I thank you,” he wrote, “for your poems, which I take with me to-morrow into the country to read. *The Burial* (a poem referring to Carlyle’s interment at Ecclefechan) is really beautiful. I do not know whether you were present at the scene, but your conception is true to the very heart. By and by when the complete figure, Carlyle, is drawn as it was, all the world will see as you see, and he will have an eternal memorial more honourable than a thousand statues, in the reverence

and affection of the whole British race throughout the world."

Twenty-eight years ago Freeland conceived the idea of the Glasgow Ballad Club, of which he became the Founder. His genial and inspiring personality had made him the centre of a coterie of youthful writers of prose and verse, and from this select circle the membership was drawn. The Ballad Club was formally constituted in 1876. It was decided that the meetings should be held monthly from November to May. The original membership numbered eleven, and the Founder was appropriately appointed President, a position he retained till his death in 1903. The objects of the Club are "the study of Ballads and Ballad Literature, and the production and friendly criticism of original Ballads contributed by the members, the word 'ballad' being interpreted in a sense sufficiently wide to include lyrical poems." Four original contributions in verse are read at each meeting by members previously selected by ballot, but in addition, voluntary contributions are welcomed. Two volumes of poems carefully chosen from those contributed have been published by Messrs. William Blackwood & Sons, Edinburgh; the first in 1885, the second in 1898. From a return by Walter Buchanan, the courteous and energetic secretary of the Club, it appears that the present resident membership is twenty, with two corresponding members—William Canton, Highgate, London, author of *A Lost Epic*, and Alexander Anderson (Surfaceman), Librarian, Edinburgh University—but only four of the original

members survive. James Hedderwick, LL.D., of the *Evening Citizen*; James H. Stoddart, LL.D., editor *Glasgow Herald*; Sheriff Spens, LL.D.; David Wingate; Professor Veitch, LL.D. Sir Wm. Allan, M.P.; J. W. Fraser, Secretary to the Baird Trust; and Robert Walker, Secretary to the Fine Art Institute, are amongst the members who have passed away. Freeland was pardonably proud of the Ballad Club, to which he was a conscientious contributor. Two of his poems, *The Flight of the Ballad Makers* and *The Peesweep Inn*, appear in the present volume, and make reference, in his quietly humorous fashion, to the annual Autumn Outings of the members. These occasions were made memorable to the members and their friends by his felicitous gift of speech. There was no display of eloquence, no effort at dramatic declamation. He was like one thinking aloud—uttering his thoughts in expressions that came to him, as it seemed, on the impulse of the moment—sometimes paradoxical, sometimes enigmatic, but with an oracular meaning which those who knew him well could fully understand and appreciate. From the ordinary monthly meetings of the Club he was seldom absent, and to the last his interest in its wellbeing was unabated. When laid aside he wrote, by way of apology for absence, “I have several times this week felt how sweet it would be to be lying in old Abraham’s capacious bosom . . . but I must hoast away a little longer in the long-spun riddle. To my beloved children in Homer I send

my blessing. May the proceedings of the night have success. Be earnest in the cause of the Lord of Ballads. Pray for the lapsed masses of ballad makers and for the day of their return to the fold."

As already indicated, the Founder was proud of the Ballad Club, but it is true also that the members were equally proud of their President. His knowledge and appreciation of all that was worth knowing both in English and Scottish literature compelled their respect, while his sympathetic, considerate, and unpretentious bearing endeared him to them all.

On the semi-jubilee of the Club, the year before his death, he was entertained to dinner and presented with a solid silver tea set and salver, on the back of which the autographs of the members were engraved.

In all literary and artistic circles of Glasgow and the West of Scotland Freeland's characteristic and striking personality was well known, and at their meetings his presence was heartily welcomed. He was one of the first members of the Glasgow Pen and Pencil Club, instituted in 1877; a member of the Thirteen Club; a leading spirit in the Bridgeton Burns Club, and one of the first to advocate the establishment of a Lectureship in Scottish Literature in connection with the Burns Federation.

During forty years of close comradeship the subject of this sketch and the present writer had many happy and sometimes unique experiences; we generally spent some period of each year holidaying together. Freeland

was a keen angler, and it was not uncommon in the earlier days of our companionship for us to start for a fortnight's tramp through the Highlands, our only impedimenta being a wallet, a knapsack, and our fishing gear. We fished where we chose, without let or hindrance, and had often to pay the penalty of having to carry our full creels of fish for miles before finding a shepherd's wife to relieve us of our burdens. Latterly Islay, Jura, and the Tweed at Broughton were our favourite haunts. In Broughton particularly he had a small circle of attached friends, to whom his presence was always a delight. During one of my visits there without him he wrote: "I hope you found all our Broughton friends well. . . . It will not be easy to forget the pleasant nights we have spent in that quiet roost by the Biggar Burn and within hearing of the fearful cataract at the back of the byre." A genial and simple dweller by Biggar water, since gone to his rest, is thus described: "His disposition is one of those which can extract sunbeams from cucumbers and store it for use in mid-winter. A little oatmeal and milk, meat and claes, an ounce of tobacco, a pinch of snuff, a few yards of roof, and a friend or two to play whist at night, what more does any man need. . . . I should like to be a shepherd and carry a crook in the valley of the Tweed and never know the asphalt again.

'Farewell to the asphalt, farewell to the din,
Farewell to the pride and the spite and the sin,
Farewell the Exchange and the Club and the Courts,
And gie me the Stream where the sweet troutie sports.'

The man who strung these rhymes had my case in his eye. But alas! we shall have to obey that power which draws us to pound away at the eternal grist-mill with so little of the eternal satisfaction that one knows ought to be the result of all this striving."

What memorable nights we spent together (especially during our earlier wanderings) by the fireside in lonely country inns, with maybe the rain beating on the window, and the wind smiting, near by, "his thunder harp of pines!" This was music that had a peculiar fascination for my friend. We were not unsocial by any means, but we had glorious hours of sympathetic silence, from which we would awake, ere retiring for the night, to rehearse, and probably discuss, the verse or the memoranda or the book that had been the subject of our cogitations. Many pages might be filled in narrating adventures that at the time of their occurrence seemed alarming enough, but which afterwards constituted memories over which we could afford to talk calmly and smile. On one occasion, after a long day's march, we lost our way at midnight on a Skye moor, and had to sleep on the driest piece of earth we could find, amidst bogs and quagmires, with the eternal Storr Mountain above us, and the lighthouse of Rona winking at our disjasket condition through the grass. At daybreak we found the lost track a little way above us on the hillside, with seven miles between us and the early morning boat at Portree. For this we made uncomely but needless haste, as the steamer, wool-gathering in the lochs, was *seventeen hours late*.

I remember an incident which might have been the death, at least for one day, of the *Glasgow Herald*. The editor being on holiday, it was Freeland's duty as responsible sub-editor to see the paper to press on Monday morning. He joined me at Lochgoilhead for a day's fishing on Saturday, meaning to return to the city by the last steamer. In an unhappy moment he was prevailed on to wait for an excursion steamer, which was advertised to sail at a later hour, but alas! the faithless excursion steamer did not come. On Sunday morning my friend started to walk to Strone. For part of the journey there was not even a track, but he plodded manfully on, through brushwood, brackens, and lush grass, in the hope of getting on board the Sunday steamer at Gourock. The Strone ferryman, however, being a conscientious man, and having scruples about Sabbath work, declined to take him across the firth. It so chanced that the editor was spending his holidays in the neighbourhood. Freeland sought him out, had his fatigue and his anxieties allayed by a sympathetic dram and by a philosophic prediction that the *Herald* was "bound to come out somehow." On this assurance he went to sleep, and, to his great relief, got a copy of the paper at Greenock on Monday morning, which bore no evidence whatever that the responsible sub-editor had been abroad. As I learned afterwards a member of the staff, supposed to be on holiday also, by mere accident dropped in at the office late on Sunday afternoon. Finding the compositors in want of copy, and fearing something might

be wrong, he cast his coat to the work and saved the situation.

Freeland's two favourite writers in poetry and prose were Shakespeare and Carlyle. The works of both writers he knew intimately. His admiration for Shakespeare was unbounded, but with a grave humour, sometimes misunderstood, he would characterise him as an arch plagiarist who had forestalled him (Freeland) in all the best things he meant to say. Of Carlyle he was an enthusiastic admirer. In this connection an incident occurred to our friend personally, the recital of which, though it turned the laugh against himself, seemed always to afford him amusement. During one of his earliest visits to London, like many another hero worshipper, he hastened to Chelsea to bow in spirit, at least, at the shrine of the Sage. Finding his way to Cheyne Row, he lingered for hours in sight of the door from which he thought, peradventure, the Seer might emerge. Was not the place where he stood hallowed ground; he felt as if standing on the threshold of some sacred temple which he dare not enter. It was sufficient, however, for him to worship afar off. Lingeringly and hopefully he scanned door and windows, but the oracle with the "lion heart" appeared not; poor, patient, enthusiastic devotee, think of his feelings when on returning to the city, and describing his sensations and experiences to his friends, it was discovered he had been looking at the *wrong house*.

Freeland had fond dreams that at some golden period

of his life circumstances would permit him to visit those classic lands of the East regarding whose art, literature, and life he knew so much from books; but those aspirations alas! were not to be realised. In 1899, while the writer was spending a prolonged recuperative holiday in the Mediterranean, Freeland wrote: "Many thanks for your card from Athens and your letter from Jerusalem. The card, as might have been expected, is unique in colour and character, but its chief interest to me is, now that you have seen Parnassus, beheld the great Temples, and stood on Mars Hill, I shall expect you to burst into verse and relieve your mind of those strains which have long remained unexpressed there—awaiting the shock that was to deliver them from their involuntary bondage. It is many years since I first became acquainted with the intellectual and literary glories of Athens and the other cities and memorable scenes of Greece—in books, of course—and when your message arrived from the city of the Goddess there went through me a shock of mingled pleasure and despair. I resolved to pack up and join you, but when I got up to prepare, the black tentacles of Glasgow took hold of me and dragged me down. We are all pounding away in the old style, making bricks without straw, but unlike the children of Israel when they were in Egypt, whither you are going. Your letter from Jerusalem naturally suggested a different set of ideas. It is with the picture of the ancient city of Jerusalem that my poetic imagination is mostly inspired, and especially at the time when

Solomon built the Temple, and when that same Temple was rent under the shock of the world-rending tragedy. In those days there was poetry in the idea of Jerusalem, now it is more of farce and fraud. No doubt the famous sites remain—in supposition, at least; and even at that have a certain imaginative if not religious value. But as far as I can understand there is hardly a city on the face of the earth that suggests more the need of a new Jerusalem, whether coming down from Heaven from God, or raised from the ground by the labour of honest and earnest men. All the same, Jerusalem as it stands is a sight worth seeing, and you can imagine how sorry I was, and am, that I could not join you on the Mount of Olives, and quote Scripture to relieve our minds as we thought pitifully of the city that was once Jerusalem the Golden.

“I shall expect a line from you from Egypt, after you have seen Alexandria, Cairo, and the Pyramids, and sailed up the mysterious and immemorial Nile. Your going there has revived some of my earliest dreams after reading fascinating sketches of Egypt, Arabia, and Palestine. Alas! I shall never see those famous places. It may be as well, for the visions I have formed of them might be undone by the mean reality.

“Glasgow stands where it did when you bade it farewell to go so far away into the land of the ancients. As compared with Athens, Jerusalem, Alexandria, and Cairo, Glasgow is a city of yesterday. But we are getting on. We are preparing for antiquity; and let

me tell you, sir, we are doing things which none of those great cities ever dreamed of in their highest moments of inspiration. Egypt is full of ghosts; Glasgow is alive with living men, thinking, inventing, and creating. Nevertheless, my dear Johnston, do I envy you the chance that came to you of treading the land of so many memorable ghosts."

While essentially of a religious nature, Freeland made no pretence of belief in prevailing orthodox opinions. This, however, was not the result either of ignorance or indifference. *Pelagius the Heretic*, one of the longest and most powerful poems in his first volume, reveals his knowledge of, and interest in, the controversies that had stirred the early Church, and which helped to mould modern religious thought. Like most of us, he was tired of narrow ecclesiastical wrangling, but had a profound reverence for everything that was pure and beautiful and true, as those acquainted with his writings, or who had the privilege of intimate personal knowledge of him in private life knew. He was a devout and patient seeker after truth. To him Life had a subtle meaning which he tried to discover, and Nature a message which he endeavoured faithfully to interpret. Writing of a short excursion he had with one of his youthful disciples—an eager naturalist—he says: "Yesterday M. and I went first-class (think of that!) to Wemyss Bay and walked up to Gourock, got a car there, and then again first-class to Glasgow, which we reached safe and sound about ten o'clock. It was a fine day. The birds were whistling as if poetically mad. The sun and the sea

made a fine glimmer between them. They seemed to recognise us, but also they seemed to ask where Johnston was. Of course I told them you were at Melrose mooning and fishing, and they seemed satisfied. In coming up the road we began to study the mosses on the dyke-sides, and I, getting *smitted*, began to do the same, and we saw some strange and beautiful but very minute wonders. Among them a species of very small whorled snails, which only God almighty could make. Altogether these dyke-sides afforded some potent proofs of the existence of a Divine Being, if these had been needed." Later, in the same vein, he wrote: "The world is still full of marvels, and God's revelation is still very far indeed from being complete. He is a perpetual revelation, and therein consists the divinity of the world and human life." Ruskin's message to a Bible-class he quoted with hearty approbation to a friend: "I should like much to send your class some message, but have no time for anything I like. My own constant cry to Bible readers is a very simple one. Don't think that nature (human or otherwise) is corrupt, don't think that you yourself are elect out of it, and don't think to serve God by praying instead of obeying."

Naturally of a kindly disposition, his instinct of benevolence was not curbed by lack of exercise. In the matter of giving to deserving, and sometimes undeserving objects, Freeland was generous to a fault. Though never over-burdened with superfluous cash, his guinea, half-guinea, or five-shilling piece was given

with spontaneous alacrity. Literary wastrels and decayed writers of verse, particularly, were sharers of his bounty, unless they came inopportunately while he was in the throes of the inexorable leader. They, however, soon learned to avoid that unlucky hour. He would often tell me that so and so, whom we mutually knew, had called again, and, "poor devil, maybe he was a fraud, but I gave him my last half-crown."

Freeland's aspirations in early life, as has been shown, like those of his friend David Gray, were to make a great name for himself in the domain of poetry. In this he might have succeeded had circumstances been different from what they were. He had the true gifts of the Seer, but they were squandered in journalism. Finding little time to devote to verse, he unburdened his poetic soul in prose, so far as poetic ideas and conceptions could be tolerated in dealing editorially with questions of the moment. But the journal of to-day, no matter how brilliant the writing may be, is covered up by the journal of to-morrow, and is consequently soon relegated to the limbo of forgotten things. Though he had not realised his early ideals, the philosophy gained by experience had in his later life all but silenced his regrets; and on the whole, I think, he was fairly content. He intended to write a book of Ballads, but those embraced in the present volume have been selected as the best specimens of his poetic remains. His *Birth Song and other Poems* contains some striking and high-toned indications of his poetic power and workmanship, and includes verses

that will not soon be forgotten, but neither they nor the poems now published quite realised what he intended to accomplish. In the following letter he indicates as much: "Your most finished poet never yet has been able to satisfy himself, his ideal ever receding before him like a vision whose abode is in the heaven of heavens." Again, later, in a spirit of pathetic surrender: "If we are not able to build cathedrals of song we may at least, who knows, be able to sing a little lyric which may not improbably cheer some human soul on the pilgrimage of life."

It is not the purpose of this short biographical sketch to attempt any critical appraisement of Freeland's work,—that must be left to others. In his poems he studiously endeavours to avoid commonplace either in thought or expression. Some of them may appear, to the casual reader, vague, mystical, and at times somewhat Byronic in their character, but there is often a subtle double meaning under the surface of the narrative which the thoughtful reader will not fail to discover.

Distinguished by a fine old-fashioned courtesy, my friend was always accessible to young literary aspirants who sought his guidance. To his friends he was loyal and true, with the honesty of direct speech whether to praise or censure. No one could be more delightful as a companion; as a husband and father he earned and received from his family the reward of loving and respectful devotion.

He was married on 23rd June, 1854, to Helen

Campbell, to whom he frequently refers in his poems, and who proved to be one of the most heroic women I ever knew. From his earlier volume I take the following lines :

Do what time will, I bless the day
When first I saw thy winsome face,
So full of April and of May,
And more than Summer's light and grace.
Full twenty Aprils, prinkt and pied,
And twenty Mays, all hawthorn white,
Have budded, flourished, waned, and died,
In tender solacements of night—
Since in a flush of golden weather,
Two spotless hearts, we came together.

.

So heart to heart, and hand in hand,
And foot to foot let us advance ;
Across the moor, the thorny land,
Beyond the stars of young romance,
I know a quiet nook, where we
May rest, while life is tossed and whirled—
Where haply we may dream or see
The last deep vision of the world ;
And in a purer, sweeter weather,
Still softly sleep or wake together.

Had he lived another year they would have celebrated their golden wedding.

Six years ago, after a serious illness, he retired from active work, and, although never idle, seemed to enjoy his well-earned leisure, but suddenly he was smitten down by the malady which resulted in his death. For a time he lingered, and vain hopes were entertained of his recovery. The Ballad Club, of which

he was the father, was in his mind all through his illness. I visited him frequently during this period. Sometimes I was recognised and sometimes not. Once he took me by the hand. "I think I know you," he said. "Yes, I would like to propose you for the Ballad Club, (of which I was one of the original members), but remember you will require to send us specimens of verse that are up to the mark or you will not be admitted."

William Freeland died at his residence in Govanhill on 27th October, 1903, in presence of his wife and several members of his family.

HENRY JOHNSTON.

GLASGOW, *October*, 1904.

BALLADS

NOTE BY THE AUTHOR.

WE learn from Hugh Macdonald's *Rambles Round Glasgow* that two theories have been adduced to explain how the three huge blocks of stone known as the "Auld Wives' Lifts" came to occupy their present position on Craigmadie Moor. Certain antiquaries believe that the stones formed a "Druidic Altar," a theory which they support by the interpretation that Craigmadie signifies the "Rock of God." The popular belief is that the curious structure was the work of three crones gifted with supernatural powers. I prefer this notion, which, as the close of the following Ballad will show, is sufficiently in harmony with the assumed religious meaning of the word "Craigmadie," the supernatural element being indicated in a manner wholly unknown to the speculators. Equally unknown was the view that the Weird Sisters in question were really those who led *Macbeth* to his ruin. Fanciful as this may seem, I willingly accept it, and ignore controversy as to the actual antiquity of the "Lifts."

THE WEIRD SISTERS.

A BALLAD OF CRAIGMADIE.

“Macbeth—How now, you secret, black, and midnight hags !

What is't you do ?

Witches—A deed without a name.”

I.

THREE Witches wonn'd in a glen o' the north,
Where Ballagan Spout comes tumbling forth—
Where the rowan red and the silver birk
Make a sunlike and a moonlike mirk :
There huddled the Sisters, nursing ires,
Like clouds conceiving new and kindling ancient fires.

FIRST WITCH.

“Be silent now, ye gentle twa,
And waken not my magic spell,
Or ye'll see a sight ye never saw
Even in that country far awa'
Where the snaw is fire and the fire is snaw
And the Master shudders himsel'.”

SECOND WITCH.

“Nay, Sister, we ken your deeds—we ken
The havoc you mak’ in castle and keep ;
We hae seen you flee owre the Lomond Ben,
Sprinkling ruin on women and men
Wearily working to mak’ a fen,
When the hungry bairns were asleep.
O weel we ken the seed you saw,
And the bonnie hairst you hope to hae
When you gang where the day forgets to daw
And the rest o’ the night comes nevermae ;
When you shall lie in the Master’s bed
Wi’ curtains o’ fire around your head ;
And you drink the cup from the burning pool
That seas o’ ice can never cool ;
O we ken your powers, Weird Sister dear,
Yet your wild words cannot work us fear.”

THIRD WITCH.

“And hear me too, my sister fine,
As you sit there sipping the hemlock wine ;
I saw you grip at the lanely cairn
Our Master, with your claws o’ airn,
When fiery faces glared in a ring,
And the Red Piper skirled frae the bing ;
I saw you play your matchless prank,
As you clutch’d your foe by neck and shank,
And flang him shrieking through the mist
To fa’ like a meteor where he wist ;

Your foe! ah, now your sweetest friend,
For ye shall meet and love i' the end.
I saw you draw the moon from her place,
And make the planets hide their face—
All save one—Love's planet sublime,
That mocketh still both death and time
Nay, mighty Sister, dinna grue—
That is the planet that ruleth you.
Not yet are you purged frae the weakness o' man,
The falsehood that put on your bosom a ban.
The knight wha won your heart like a thief
Wed the Earl's daughter, and scorned your grief.
Fie, Sister, cut him frae out your breast,
As you stabb'd him asleep in his bridal nest;
Root out his memory! Until then
You'll be as saft as the daughters o' men."

II.

O then that mighty Witch uprose,
And strode a pace through the wood;
And the tall oaks snapt like reeds at her blows;
She wither'd the grass where she stood.
She took Ballagan Spout in her palm,
And the waters ceased to flow;
She made the night winds cease their psalm:
She stole the brier and the woodruff's balm;
She made a place of woe:
And she tore a ponderous rock in her ire,
And hurl'd it into a western shire.

The others fed their fire wi' leaves,
And laught at their Sister in their sleeves.
Then took the two a lighted brand,
And waved it three times in their hand ;
And ere the wilder Sister turn'd,
From base to peak the mountain burn'd ;
And the Spout again began to roar
A mightier torrent than before :
Though not sweet water was that flood
But a cataract of flaming blood,
Drawn from the veins of reiver men
Lying battle-gash'd in the upper glen.

The eldest Sister smiled in scorn
To see this mockery of the morn ;
And faintly breathed upon the scene,
When all the red was changed to green ;
And all the wood, the stream, the glen,
Were peopled thick with Elfin men,
And Elfin maidens sweet to see
Dancing in wildering ecstasy.

THIRD WITCH.

“List, Sister of Imperial strain :
In such poor tricks is little gain :
Well served they in the ancient times
To draw a mortal on to crimes :
They served us when we gave Macbeth
A crown for gentle Duncan's death ;

Though little reck'd he that his own
Lurk'd for him underneath the throne :
Ambition could not see our cheat,
Nor how red success breeds defeat.
Such mummeries may ruin men—
They blur not our far-seeing ken.
Have we not plann'd a larger crime
Than ever blanch'd the face of time?
But till it ripen—till the hour
When we must wield our craft and power,
Moulding the Imperial passions, till
Good is the subtlest means of ill,
Let us not play the fool, nor be
The sport o' our ain glamourie."

FIRST WITCH.

"Fond Sisters, greatest 'neath the sun,
All you can do, have I not done?
Show me one feat of art or might,
I'll better it this fateful night,
And so convince you that my nerve
May through all storm and struggle serve."

III.

"So be it," quoth the youngest Witch,
With a' the charms of magic rich,
Who, towering to her grimmest height,
And conjuring up her fiercest might

By oaths that made the adder wink
And the toad shudder in his chink,
Clutch'd the grey rock, and from it tore
Piece huger than e'er Titan bore
To hurl at Pagan god of yore.
She hitch'd it on her shoulder, then
Swept through the midnight's starry ken
Owre the forest and owre the stream,
Flickering like a fate-spun dream,
Her drizzling hair behind her flowing
Like grisly mist from jagg'd peaks blowing.
At length above Craigmadie Moor
She paused to make her compass sure,
And shift and ease the biting boulder
That scarr'd even her sin-waukit shoulder.
But just as she prepared to rise
A higher flight into the skies,
Her burthen slid, and, whirling, fell
Far downward in a mossy dell,
Where firm it lay, deep fix'd in earth,
As if the spot had given it birth.
The wan Witch wept, as witches weep,
Black tears of wrath that poison sleep;
And the pitiless Sisters added gall
Of laughter to the luckless fall.

IV.

Then bared the second Witch her arms
And breast, a feast of yellow charms ;

Sipt of the hemlock, touch'd the ash,
To give her sinews pith and dash,
And prayed a prayer—for witches pray—
To their hell-god not far away,
And smote the neighbouring crag a blow
That made it thrill and moan with woe,
Until it broke. Then on her back
She caught the block, huge, rough, and black,
And swung it nimbly through the air,
And made the planets wildly stare.
Nay, one small comet who, at that time,
Out of the infinite rush'd sublime,
Trailing the curved river of her hair,
Graced with star-jewels, golden-fair,
Paused when she saw the strenuous hag
Toiling right moonward with her crag,
And shuddered at the loathsome thing ;
So, coiling in a cunning ring
The marvel of her locks, she lay
Hid in it like a rose till day.
Meanwhile, the Witch had reach'd the space
Where, heart-sore, lying on her face,
Her younger sister gnaw'd her heart,
Mad at the failure of her art.
Not thus would she fall down, and lie
A mark for pride or pity's eye :
Ha ! She would show what power could do
When shaped by foresight clear and true.
But who can fathom fate, or see
The end in the beginning ? She,

Just as she hitch'd the mossy stone,
Was stung by an adder to the bone ;
The subtle creature, who had clung
To his own rock, now plied his tongue,
Predestined from an early time
Spoiler of vanity and crime.
A shriek of horror rent the air,
Which woke the wild beasts in their lair,
As down the second boulder shot
Sheer by the first in that lone spot ;
And the weak Witch, late vaunting, vain,
Fell by her Sister, mad with pain.

v.

How scornfully the great Witch smiled
To see her vainer Sisters foiled,
And lying vanquished !—though their deed
No arm could equal, less exceed,
Save one, upborne by Hell or Heaven
And dipt in burning streams of levin.
Then stood she up her full great length
And bared her wrinkled arms of strength,
And flung her lean locks to the wind
And uttered forth her stormy mind ;
But what she said, I dare not tell—

It could but scar the beauteous earth ;
I know it made the fiends in Hell
Grow pale and shudder 'mid their mirth ;

They brought her seeds, and plants, and flowers,
And dust, and stones of mystic hue,
And crawling creatures from the bowers,
And slips of rowan, and ash, and yew,
And waters of all wells and streams,
All juices from the hidden rocks,
And dews that make immortal dreams,
And drops that give immortal shocks,
And essences whereof even still

Proud Science in her amplest lore
Hath given no trace, though Nature's mill
Doth mix them daily as of yore,—
Were brought from earth and air, and piled
At the wild Witch's feet, while she
Muttered deep spells, and dreamily smiled
At something she alone could see.

One word, then gaped the menial earth,
And gave a fiery cauldron birth,
Whereout a face of horror glared
And the bold Witch to action dared.

“I venture all! I venture all!

Nor Heaven nor Hell shall me appal.”
Then at her nod, from hill and glen
Came forth weird women and weird men,
Who fed the cauldron with the spoils
Of Nature's ecstasies and toils.

VI.

Now, while within the cauldron rolled
The boiling surges, green and gold,
The withered Witch, untouched by fear,
Deftly unlinked her girdled gear ;
And as an August thunder-cloud
Opes and reveals as from a shroud
The haggard ruin of the moon,
So from her dim grey robe full soon
Beamed forth the Witch's yellow form
As from a thousand years of storm :
A brow of ruin that bore the trace
Of the full moon of maiden grace ;
An eye of terror whose virgin fire
Had kindled flames of young desire ;
A shape that in its grisliest line
Seemed scarce more devilish than divine.
A moment on the bubbling brim
She stood, and hummed a mystic hymn ;
And then she scanned the peering stars,
And woo'd the warrior planet Mars,
Who fearing looked and shuddering fled
That vision of enchantments dead.
She called him planetary fool,

And laughed a wild and wildering laugh :
"No Venus I, by Grecian rule,
For yonder wondering god to quaff.
But come, ye elements of power,
Give me the edge of scimeter,

Renew my essence for one hour
With energy to rend a star!"

This said, she flung her arms on high,
And dared the heavens with dauntless eye;
Then plunged into the burning flood
That boiled and coiled, and flashed like blood.
A choir of voices filled the air
With mournful music of despair,
As if a soul had gone to doom
For ever from life's gleam and gloom.
And far away the silvery spheres
Grew wet as with a mist of tears;
And near, though from an unseen globe,
Was heard a pitying angel's sob.
But still the cauldron's ruddy glow
Made all the glen a spectral show—
As in a theatre when all eyes
Strain to behold new wonders rise
Of terror or of beauty, drawn
From wrecks of twilight or of dawn.
Then as you may have seen in June
The lovely blossom of the moon
Burst like an angel from a cloud
And draw the worship of the crowd,
So from her fierce transforming bath
The witch upsprang, all silvery fire,
With all the charms a maiden hath,
Eyes bright with that heroic wrath
That maddens kingdoms with desire.

Again upon the bubbling brim,
A dazzling vision of delight,
She stood, and sang a witching hymn,
That charmed each eye and ear of night ;
For from the glen's dim nooks and shelves
Keeked out the fairies and the elves,
Thrilling with wonder at the sight.

“This hour is mine ! This hour is mine !”
She murmured in the lurid shine ;
And turned her round, and on the north
Flashed all the beauty of her eye
That brought the borealis forth
To see what star illumed the sky.
She raised a lustrous arm, and then
Touched with her gem-like finger tips
The huge grey rock that walled the glen
And made it ope mysterious lips,
That widened while she hummed a tune
As from the bird-like heart of June ;
And moving to the music came
Out of the mountain's mystic mouth
A boulder of gigantic frame,
And nestled at the Witch's feet.
Then turned she to the soft-eyed south
Where the young moon reigned mild and sweet ;
Smiling in triumph and humming still,
The music that gives power to will,
She dipt her white hand, dainty-fair
I' the golden ripple of her hair,

And plucked a single strand of three ;
And beaming with a subtle glee,
Glued one end to the monstrous stone
And made the other a finger zone ;
Then floating upward from the ground,
Without a sigh, without a sound,
Moonward the boulder through the air
She carried by the triple hair,
As easily as an eagle might
Carry a new lamb, daisy-white,
Far sunward to his mountain home
Hung dizzily in the azure dome.

VII.

What wonder that the starry host
Should mark with awe that startling ghost,
White in the moonbeams' silvery white,
Yet touched to rose by inward light,
And moving like a vision, drawn
From beauty's heart to beauty's dawn
That lingers still in heaven—a dream
Of what shall be and cease to seem !
What wonder that the Holy Saint
Conning the stars grew pale and faint,
When he beheld that loveliness
And felt the trouble and the stress
Of the hot fever of his youth
Again bedim the glory of truth !
What wonder he should veil his eyes

And curse such sorcery of the skies,
And ply the scourge upon his skin
To stay the memory of sin !
What wonder that the bold young wight
Belated on that fateful night,
Seeing the beauteous marvel soaring
Should fall upon his knees adoring,
And stretch forth arms as if to woo
The lustrous maiden from the blue !
What wonder that the sisters dark,
Huddling beneath so grim and stark,
Should shudder when they saw the glister
And glory of their mightier Sister,
Whose loveliness revealed to them,
As in a magic mirror-gem
The horror of their own weird faces,
And ruin of all limber graces !
What wonder they should moan and loll
In envious agony of soul
When they beheld, and not in dreaming,
The starlike eyes above them beaming
Of their most ancient mate, though now
With youth supernal on her brow,
And on her bosom buds of bloom,
And down her side those lines of doom
That thrilled the mighty Cæsar's heart,
When Cleopatra, witch of art,
Flashed on the Roman, strong and wise,
And shook the Empire with her eyes !

VIII.

But now the Sister stayed her flight,
And paused upon her airy height
One moment, like a star whose light
Pales all the splendours of the night.
Still holding by the triple hair
The monstrous boulder, she began
To drop down daintily through the air
According to her cunning plan ;
For she would show how Science could
Do more with less than brute-force rude,
And let her darkened Sisters see
One vision of great things to be,
When art took Science by the hand
To vanquish Fate by sea and land.
Her Sisters shuddering in each bone
Saw o'er them poised the giant stone,
Nor stirred a limb, being overspelled
By beauty that, though unbeheld,
Except in dreams of song and art,
Makes rapture in the human heart.
They could but stare that wondrous hour
To see such mingled grace and power ;
For lo ! at last their marvellous mate,
Ever the favourite child of Fate,
Immortal in her loveliness,
Withouten strain, withouten stress,
Gently her mighty rock let down
On the other two, their peak and crown.

Then stood she on the top sublime,
Like dawn anticipating time ;
Eyes beaming like new-kindled stars
That glance from heaven through golden bars ;
A form of perfect mould ; a voice
Whose music made the night rejoice—
For as she sang her song of pride,
Gleamed from the heath on every side
Innumerable eager eyes
To see the wondrous witcheries
Of one who easily held in fee
The underworld of glamourie,
And dreamed of winding once again
About the hearts and souls of men,
Wan Hecate's spells, now powerless growing
Through spells too pure for Hecate's knowing.
This was the crime the Sisters three
Had planned against humanity.
She ceased to sing—she raised her hand
As if to blast the sleeping land ;
But lo ! ere she could mould her lips
To launch the mandate of eclipse,
A living light slid from the blue
As from a special star and new,
And for one moment all the grace
Of limb and beauty of her face
Flashed in the luminance of the gleam
A perfect shape in perfect dream :
Then suddenly upon her knees
She dropped in ruins and agonies,

While from her passed like light in storm
The youth and glory of her form,
And on the vast grey stone she lay
A poor weird wreck of wrinkled clay ;
No voice within her lips so wan,
Cursed by the curse she meant for man.
Then sprang her Sisters to her aid
But they by heavenly powers were stayed ;
For from another beam of light
That touched the triple altar-height,
Was heard this utterance of doom—
“Your works of pride shall be your tomb ;
Melt in them!—sleep till time shall cease,
And leave poor mortal man in peace,
That he may keep him true and whole
In obstinate probity of soul !”
And the Weird Sisters from the view
Melted like phantom forms of dew,
Each in her huge grey boulder-urn,—
Nor shall to living day return.

IX.

Now soon the prophet-cock crew shrill,
And answers came from farm and mill ;
Then rose the lark, the sun, and then,
Craigmadie Moor, Ballagan Glen
Were thrilled with melodies so fine,
Seemed as if nothing undivine
Had ever walked the beauteous earth,
So perfect was the morning mirth.

THE SWORD OF WALLACE.

“Old swords have tongues.”

I.

LO! I am the sword of Wallace, and never
a sword could be
More hacked for a nation's rights in the Battle of
Liberty.
Nay, look at my rusted edges, nor tremble, there
needs no power
To waken the rapture and splendour of fight this
peaceful hour;
Though the battle-heat yet kindles whenever each
day returns
That I flashed in the grasp of the hero whose spirit
yet in me burns.

II.

Great was the day that my maker dipped my steel
in sacred fire,
And forged me with hammer and anvil that rang
like a freeman's lyre;

When my future chief stood o'er me and saw me
tempered well
To the music of the minstrel who gave me the
battle spell.
Ah! then I leapt into being in my glorious master's
hand,
As he whirled me aloft and kissed me and called me
his holy brand.

III.

Yea, holy I was, like Wallace, whose lofty and
godlike mind
Dreamed ever with me of Freedom and the weal of
kith and kind.
We loved each other like lovers, and, living side by
side,
He fondled me like a husband, I thrilled to him like
a bride;
And often in secret he grasped me, and swore by the
Holy Rood
To strike, not for England's evil, but only for Scot-
land's good.

IV.

How kindly of heart and purpose! How kindlier-
souled than kings!
Yet his hero-mind was poisoned by the keenest of
mortal stings;

For the meanest of the foemen struck from his
bosom's throne

The loveliest wife in Clydesdale, the Flower of Lam-
ington.

Ah! eager was I to soothe him, and I wept within
his hand:

Then arose his wife's sweet spirit as the genius of the
land:

She smiled like Freedom upon him, the noblest
vision to him

Who would fight and bleed for his country though he
perish limb by limb.

v.

Then we plied the vaunting invader in many a fort
and hold,

And taught him the art of heroes stern-born 'mid the
mountains cold.

And one great day I remember, when the Southron
swarmed in might

On the plains of shuddering Stirling in the pride of
honour and fight.

My hero clothed me in lightning, and dazzled the
glaring foe,

As I flamed in thunder of battle red-raining death
and woe.

The boasters were tossed on billows of havoc, and
weltering lay

Till the eagles swooped from the Highlands to the
feast of joy that day.

VI.

But a bitter hour befel us, when, envious of his fame,
The Barons turned from the Patriot, and reddened
his brow with shame ;
For the English came upon us, thick pouring from
rock and ridge,
And the battle raged and ravened at Falkirk, by
Carron Bridge.
Again and again we charged them, each hero fighting
like ten ;
And Wallace and I shore spaces in those ranks of
Englishmen ;
But ever swarming and storming, diminished, yet still
undone,
They smote us, wounding our bravest, ten deaths in
the death of one ;
And the end came with its sorrow, for although I
streamed with fight,
They beat us, those valiant English, and ours was
the gloom of night.

VII.

And many a day thereafter we wandered by sea and
land,
Smiting the foe in his folly, I still the Patriot's
brand.
But the spirit of Fate pursued us, sleek-footed, and
ever nigher,

In guise, a friendly angel—in heart, a fiendish liar.
For, lo, as my hero slumbered, they ravished me from
his side,
And left him undefended, without or brand or bride.
Bitterly still I remember the horror of that hour;
Almost I screamed to wake him, but heaven withheld the power;
Almost I rose to smite them—oh, one touch of his
hand,
And we had made the felons as carrion in the land!
And hastened the joy of Scotland by many a goodly
turn—
The joy of triumph and glory that crowned her at
Bannockburn!
Ah! woe to the towers of Glasgow! Robroyston, woe
to thee!
Where mean Menteith betrayed us, and earned a
traitor's fee.
Was ever a baser noble? or a Scot so false and fell?
If there is justice in Heaven, he wanders the depths
of Hell!

THE QUEEN'S RING.

A BALLAD OF CADZOW FOREST.

O CADZOW Forest is fair to see,
No fairer forest in all the land,
Yet in it lurks a mystery
None but the bard may understand.

.
It was the sweet midsummer time,
When all the forest burst in song,
Queen Langueth hummed a bird-like rhyme
With lips that never murmured wrong.

She sat upon the castle wall
Soft wrapt in visions of delight ;
She heard the Avon's waters fall
Like dream-waves from a dream-like height.

When would her lingering lord return
From carnage of the western wars,
Where trumpets blow, red banners burn
Against the unoffending stars?

When would the heathen cease to rage,
And spear and sword be laid at rest,
And peaceful toils the land engage,
And poor folk be no more opprest?

Thus sighed the Queen, then thought of him,
The Saint of Molendinar Glen,
Whose prayers were potent to dislimb
The wild beast and even wilder men;

Or make them clear the tangled space,
And plough and harrow, sow and reap;
And teach them how, by ways of grace,
Their dear immortal souls to keep.

She prayed that Kentigern might win
The savage spirit of her lord,
And tame him from his ways of sin,
And the wild passion of the sword.

But hark! what sound is this she hears
Within the forest, sweetly wild?
Is it the music of the spheres?
Or angels crooning to a child?

Slow wheeled the sun into the west;
Slow came the yellow wonder-moon;
Each bird was silent in its nest,
Was only heard that wonder-tune.

The lovely Langueth, in a dream,
Slid dream-like from the castle wall ;
So like a phantom did she seem,
Her footsteps sounded not at all.

No one beheld her ; and the gate
Swung soundless on its mighty hinge ;
The watchman, wide-eyed, walked like fate,
Nor saw a feather nor a fringe.

Into the forest did she go,
Straight where the magic music led,
Untouched by fear, unwitting woe,
Unmarvelling how she went or sped.

And still the music drew her on
Through vast dim glades of brooding oak,
Now where the yellow moonlight shone,
Now where the wildered owl awoke.

At length she came into a space,
A circled theatre of green—
Christ shield her with the wings of grace
And all the sweet saints intervene !

For there, in mazy moonlight, wheeled
The beauty of all fairyland,
Each moving as if zephyr-heeled,
Each with a lily in her hand.

O sweet the music, light the dance,
O bright the glance of fairy een :
O fairest vision of romance
In Cadzow Forest ever seen !

“The Queen! the Queen!” and all was still ;
And one grand fairy led her in ;
She followed, for she had no will,
But happy, with no thought of sin.

“Listen, O Queen, and mark us well ;
We are your friends by fell and flood ;
For this is true which now I tell—
You have one drop of fairy blood :

“You cannot guess ; we may not say
How came it : 'tis enough to know
That we are bound by night and day
To guard you from a hidden foe.

“He comes to-morrow with the King,
A knight, yet demon-hearted man :
To work your ruin by your Ring
Is the fell purpose of his plan.

“What reason? Well the demon sees
You may, if not to ruin hurled,
Your kinsfolk from their doom release,
And lead to Christ the fairy world.

“So lend your Ring—nay, ’tis our will;
And wear this magic counterfeit;
The demon shall not work you ill,
And we shall baffle his deceit,

“Ho! bring the cup: one little sip
Will feed the fairy in your breast,
And give new charm to eye and lip,
Give happy dreams to happy rest.”

.

Uprose the sun, the shadows fled,
Was heard the mingled forest hum;
Queen Langueth lay upon her bed
And wondered if the King had come.

Surely she had a blessed night!
Had she been in the forest green?
Had she beheld a fairy sight?
Was she herself a fairy Queen?

And did she sip the fairy dew?
And did she wear a fairy Ring?
O Fairy Christ! if this were true,
What were the passion of the King?

A trumpet through the forest rang,
A far-off trumpet coming nigher:
Then she remembered with no pang,
And in her heart less fear than fire.

Quick flashing to the walls she passed
To welcome home the weary band ;
And glad were they to see at last
The wonder of the forest land.

The King, sweet raptured by the sight,
Enwound her is his mighty arms,
Where, like a spirit of delight,
She lay, unawed by hooded harms.

“Come hither, Sir Erne of the Isles !
Here, Langueth, lo ! a valiant knight ;
No woman upon whom he smiles
But melts to love before the sight.

“But Pagan he—you teach him Christ,
And bring him healed into the fold,
Or send him to friend Mungo's tryst,
Ere yet the woodlands drop their gold.”

A goodly knight, no demon he ;
So Langueth thought as time went by,
For he would learn right eagerly,
But still would pause and oft would sigh.

And Langueth, too, grew sad apace,
As if in sympathy with him ;
And looking on each other's face,
The world beyond grew dull and dim.

And sometimes heard she in the wood
The fairy music as of old ;
And O ! it seemed so sweet and good—
A warning 'gainst the ill foretold.

Surely a spell was on her heart ;
It was not love, though it might seem ;
Was it the demon's subtle art
Plunging her soul in evil dream ?

The King's brow darkened ; well he knew
Some ill was hovering o'er the Queen—
Sir Erne?—nay, he was fair and true ;
Sure truer knight was never seen.

Yet the cloud deepened into doubt,
Nor lightened as they scoured the plain ;
Nor bay of hound, nor hunter's shout
Eased in his mind the gnawing pain.

At noon they sat them down to rest,
Where Avon mingles with the Clyde ;
The knight made many merry jest,
And careless flung his scrip aside :

Then slept, or seemed to sleep ; the King
With curious hand the wallet took,
When from it dropped the Queen's own Ring,
And all his soul with passion shook.

"O double facehood! double death!"

He turned to slay the traitor there;
The fiend had vanished!—but a breath
Of smoke was left to stain the air.

O then the monarch in his rage,
Tossed the vile bauble in the stream;
When lo! a little elfin page
Rushed to the water with a scream,

And dived and caught the sparkling Ring,
Yet came not to the bank again,
But flashed away, a fish-like thing,
Down with the current to the main.

Rode home the King—grim, thunder-browed;
Dead lay the Queen within his mind—
The forest in its terror bowed;
A horror moaned upon the wind.

And yet far off he seemed to hear
The mystic voices of a clime,
Where tender sphere doth sing to sphere,
The eternal, soothing fretful time.

And now the music ringed him round,
And timed the paces of his steed;
And now he lingered 'mid the sound,
Enchanted from his pain and speed.

So, when he reached his forest nest,
Black murder from his mind had sped;
A living Queen was on his breast—
But O the sorrow of his bed!

“The Ring! the Ring!—where is the Ring?
The wedding-ring I gave to you,
Which held the true heart of a King,
For ever and for ever true!”

“O Rederc, where is your brave knight,
The knight you bound me to redeem?
A demon he, who came to blight,
The glory of our royal dream.

“We are of Christ, but he of hell,
Who thought to do Christ’s kingdom wrong;
But I am pure—’tis truth I tell,
And you shall know it all ere long.

“The Ring?—Ah, yes, he had a ring,
But not the Ring I won from thee;
My King—yea, if you are a King,
Wait till the morrow—trust to me!”

They slept—a sword between them drawn—
For still the King was dark and sad;
But long before the blessed dawn
Had made the forest bright and glad,

Queen Langueth's nimble fairy kin,
 Were busy on her sweet behest,
 To prove that not a dream of sin,
 Had ever touched her lovely breast.

How find the missing Fairy Ring?
 Well knew the angler Kentigern;
 A little hook, a little string,
 A little faith in power eterne:

And lo! a fish, and in its mouth,
 The magic ring that fooled the knight:
 "Haste, take it, vanish to the south,
 And bring the longing Queen delight."

"Master, I vanish!—I am he—
 A fish, a sprite, an elfin page;
 No monk can swim or fly like me,
 Or play the child or act the sage.

"Is this the Ring?—Ah, no such thing;
 This the illusion and defence;
 Well guarded we the Queen's true Ring,
 Paying the demon in his own pence."

.

Lo, where they linger, King and Queen,
 'Mid moonlight on the castle wall;
 They doubt that doubt hath ever been,
 For love is faith, and faith is all.

O Cadzow Forest is fair to see,
Its oak, and pine, and fairy fern;
And sweet its fairy memorie
Of Rederc, Langueth, and Kentigern.

THE STRANGER

RIDING lonely, riding late
He came unto a castle gate,
A stranger from a foreign land,
Dim-eyed, large bearded, desert tanned.
He raised a hand, and without din
They lowered the bridge and let him in—
And, as he passed, the watchman swore
That he had seen the face before.
Yet never turned he head or eye
The crowding faces to espy.

They gave him welcome, meat and wine,
As who should say, "All ours is thine."
Yet nothing did he drink or eat,
But sat and brooded in his seat.
Then took they him into a room
Sweet scented with the heather bloom,
And left him there alone to rest,
The weary, worn, unquestioned guest.

Now at the middle of the night
The castle started with affright.
Hush! was it thunder, wind, or rain?
Or long, deep moan of human pain?
Some heard a bugle blown, and some
Heard the far 'larum of a drum;
Some heard the tramp of rushing steeds,
The clang and clash of battle deeds;
Some woke as from a troubled dream,
And saw a sword on helmet gleam;
And then a mighty figure reel,
And fall beneath the piercing steel.
One had a vision of a land—
A long weird wilderness of sand
Whereon reposed the bleeding hosts,
Under the moon, like dreaming ghosts,
And one old warrior, grand and calm,
Slumbered beneath a spectral palm,
His face so worn—Great God! the guest
Who yester eve came seeking rest:
He and no other—Heavenly Power!

Then swiftly came from base and tower
The castle's inmates, startled, white—
Ghastly by torchglare in the night;
And fearfully moving through the gloom,
Sought with one mind the stranger's room.
They found it, knocked, then entered there,
But all was vacant, bed and chair.
The pillow was unpressed—the wine

Smiled duskily in its dream divine,
Unravished by a mortal mouth
Parched by the deserts of the south.
Where was the Stranger? Where was he,
Last leaf of some old Chivalry?
None knew; and none could guess; and each
Crept forth in fear, and chilled in speech.

LEGEND OF THE FOX.

DIM, in a shadowy land was born
A phantom-like November morn:
The chill grey haunted landscape seemed
A picture that the sun had dreamed
In the cold visionary hour
When neither Will nor Fate hath power,
But all things drowse, and drift, and chance,
Finding no haven of Romance.

The sheep-dog that, in summer time,
Had hailed his collie friend in rhyme,
Still dozed beside the placid cows,
Loving their healthy breath and brows,
And smiled to hear, himself so cool,
The grumbling passion of the bull.

At length there was a stir in heaven;
Up went the mist, the cloud was riven;

The huddling shadows fled in fear
From silvery dart and yellow spear
Shot from the dawn-gleam, and the sun
Who rolled in glory, vast and dun,
Out of his palace in the East,
Fiery and splendid from the feast.

With jewels flashed the lingering green
Of meadow, slope, and forest lean ;
And the gorged rivulets danced in glee
Through pastoral sweetness to the sea ;
And lo ! undreaming of despair,
The lark, a jubilant soul in air,
Soared, warbling, upon volant wing,
The still remembered songs of spring.

And then there was a change on earth—
The kindling of its soul to mirth :
A sudden bugle thrilled the air
With keen-edged music, killing care,
That made the landscape stir and tingle,
And hounds and hunters eagerly mingle,
And strain, as if to reach that inn
Where, rough as virtue, sleek as sin,
The tawny leader of the chase
Eyed from his loophole all the case,
And smiled—so like a thinking man
Armed with a shrewd avenging plan
Against his foes. “They dream,” quoth he,
“Of sport whose end is tragedy.

So let them have it : but this day
One hunter shall perform a play
Undreamt of in his dome of brain
Where planets roll but for his gain.
They come, air-footed, for the spin—
Break ground, and let the hunt begin !”

Hark ! hark ! a sharp, an eager cry
Bursts from the mystic covert nigh :
The Fox is found ! Away he reels
Red-streaming lightning at his heels ;
The mightiest hunter in the van,
A figure more of god than man,
Proud of his valour and his power
Impassable in the impossible hour.
When the mad elements combined
To strike and terrorise mankind,
Joyous he stood, unawed, and quaffed
The tempest as a glorious draught :
Let earth be wrapt in fire and flood,
Still, Titan thrilled within his blood,
Fighter with gods.

But now, the game
Was lesser, and of humbler fame ;
Yet not less earnest was the chase,
With hound and Fox before his face.
Behold him flashing like a star
O'er dyke and ditch and hedge and scar :
Outracing all, he saw at length

A wild and ruined place of strength,
Round which wise Reynard with a bound
Vanished from huntsman and from hound ;
But where, he could not see or spell :
There only stood beside a well
A peak-faced jockey, meek and quaint,
Yet more like sinner than like saint ;
One hand straight to his knee-breech lop
The other held a wondrous crop,
Barred like the yellow adder's skin,
And flashing like the golden whin,
As when in March the sun redeems
Kind Nature from her winter dreams.
"Where is the Fox?" the huntsman cried
And that cool manikin replied
With courtesy, but not too kind,
"Dismount, good sir, and search and find."
This was too much for that great son
Of thunder, so to be undone,
And fiercely he upraised an arm,
But that quaint figure had a charm
Quite hidden from the man of might ;
And quick, ere he had time to smite,
He sprawled upon the ground, defiled—
A giant weaker than a child.

Mark now the magic of the scene,
And wonder how the thing had been.
That jockey, Elf of fire and force,
Mounted with ease the hunter's horse,

And touched the hunter artfully,
And cried, with triumph in his eye,
“My turn has come! I was the Fox,
Now you are he; and all the shocks
That I have borne now you must bear.
Away through upland Renfrew air!—
Away, and you shall surely find
The sweetness of a fox’s mind;
Up, and away, the sun is bright,
And smiles to see this magic sleight;
Off, Fox, man-creature of the mode,
Who rode the storm and played the god.”

Then from the pool’s brink rose the man
Fox-shaped, fine beast, a beauteous tan;
Eyes fierce, red rings around the rims,
And passion firing heart and limbs.
And first, seven ells, a mighty bound,
He measured from that sedgy ground;
Then round the wood, and o’er the muir,
He drank the keen November air,
Which brought a memory to his brain
Of festivals of dry champagne;
And dreams of many a lovely hour
Spent with sweet ladies in a bower;
Of golden nights in opera stalls
When music held best men as thralls.
How happy was this man as Fox,
As now he winded to the rocks!
Up! up! How glorious ’twas to feel

The lower world around him reel,
Meek subject to himself, the king,
Reigning within his mountain ring!

But still behind him rode the Wight
Smiling and chuckling like a Sprite,
Heading the varmint where he should,
Not where the royal varmint would.
Well knew the cantering moralist
The secret of the royal twist:
"The king is master of himself;
None else—the rest are on the shelf.
But truth hath quite another tune
Even in November as in June;
And this is how it stands—God wot:
No man's sole master of his lot.
Commander is commanded still;
His will is but another's will;
The victor is the vanquished man,
The victim of his own deep plan.
Why, even the mighty Alexander
Was slave of an unknown commander,
Unknown to him, but to us known
Who sit on quite another throne."
That's how the Fox-man thought, and smiled,
Hunting the Man-fox round the wild,
Keeping him well upon the height
To feast him on that fine delight
Which he, as man, declared they find
In being hunted down the wind.

So up the hill and round the hill
He chased him with a hunter's skill,
Until the once proud Beast in man
Longed for the woods of Barrochan,
Where he might pause awhile, and dream
Of rest and sleep in life's young scheme :
When he was forthright first in all,
And gave the pace to great and small,
And no one dared to question when
His brows gloomed thunder-like on men,
Or his eye burned the boldest dawn,
As subject to his sole renown.
How wretched now the great Man-brute !
Ah ! happy would he be to suit
His mighty mindedness to dust,
Lie low in straw, and gnaw a crust ;
If but some god would break the spell,
And snatch him from his bestial hell
Back to the heaven of humble things.
Not yet ! not yet ! The mountain rings
With bridles and with yelp of hounds ;
And still the merciless Imp confounds
The hopes of that misshapen thing
Toiling as Fox through moss and ling.

So up the hill and round the hill,
From rock to rock, from rill to rill,
The chase rolled merrilie—merrilie—
The wild Imp shrieking in his glee :
“You mighty hunter of the rocks,

How like you hunting as the Fox?
Is it delight to race on fours
In spite of dignity and sores,
When all your kin have come to see
How you, a man of taste, can be
A Fox, and vindicate his wit
Set forth in journalistic writ,
That all is sentiment and sin
Which says you do not love a spin
With dogs and dandies, with their noses
Smelling your brush as maids smell roses?
Come now, it is a joy to me,
A Fox of wisdom and degree,
To see you understand the case;
The large glad tear upon your face
But does you credit. We shall now
Lessen the circle on the brow
And ease the pace, while we untwist
The coil we made when you uprist
Out of your fine humanity.
Nay, do not fall upon your knee
As if in gratitude. I am no god,
As well you know, since you have trod
Those hills, so wildering to the mind
That hath some kin in humankind.
Cease, hound! and let him easily wind
Round to the moist nook where he fell
As man to rise a Fox as well.
Gently—nay, no more tears—'tis done:
Have we not had a lovely run?

"Console yourself : for this day's pain
 There will be one immortal gain.
 It shall be sung in living times
 By one old singer of new rhymes ;
 And though the future, many-eyed,
 May wonder if a bard had lied,
 The greatest critics then alive
 To find its inner sense shall strive,
 And with due eloquence declare
 The oracle of the good and fair—
 That since the ballads of old days
 Set the world's fancy in a blaze,
 There had not been, and scarce would be,
 A nobler burst of minstrelsie.
 Within its simple language lies
 A tale of wondrous sacrifice ;
 Of man who, in a brutal age,
 In spite of mockery and rage
 Took a mean shape, and from a race
 Lifted a curse—the land's disgrace.
 Thus will the coming ages tell
 The story that us two befel,
 Who proved to all the world the lie—
 'Foxes love pain, and smiling die.' "

Those sweet consolings brought the chase
 Back to the pool's brink. Then the face
 Of all things changed. The Man-fox fell.
 The Fox-man tumbled from his selle—
 The peak-faced Imp—and with his whip

Touched the still figure on the lip,
Which started from the ground a Man—
Freed from the horror of the ban—
The mighty hunter of the year,
With soul incapable of fear,
Who glared and searched, but only saw,
As on the slopes of Mistylaw,
A figure slinking through the wood
Monk-like, eye burning through his hood.

What rustled so amid the leaves?
The wood-gods laughing in their sleeves!

LADY OSPREY.

“ Out, damned spot ! ”—*Shakespeare.*

SHE slumbered in a silvery gloom,
The Lady of the Snowy Plume,
Whom all men worshipped with delight
In fête by day, in dance by night.
Where'er her magic foot she pressed,
That was a jewelled spot and blessed;
And all the gilded world and hoary,
Followed her moving in her glory.

And as she slumbered, came a dream,
A picture of her life supreme,

The foremost in each splendid throng
Of gaiety and jest and song.
And she was happy in the balm
Of sleep, unwondering and calm,
As, in a glass, she seemed to see
Her spotless Plume of victory.

But suddenly the dream became
A tent-like arc of heaven, aflame
With dawn and multitudes of birds,
Whose callings seemed articulate words,
That hurt the Lady's startled ear,
And thrilled her tender heart with fear,
So human-like were those sad cries
Wailing upon her from the skies.

They drooped and moaned above her bed,
Bird-ghosts with shattered wings that bled;
And one small form with crimson breast
Most pitiful of all the rest,
Murmured as might a wounded boy—
“Why am I slaughtered for your joy?
Know you this sign of burning hue
Is His sweet blood once shed for you?

“The soldier pierced His sacred side;
'Tis pierced again to glut your pride!
The awful scene I lingered near,
Undaunted by the Roman spear;
And as His life drops fell on me,

So from my heart they fall on thee.
See, Lady, see ; your snowy Plume
Is blood-red with our death and doom !”

The Lady shuddered as she heard
The sad accusings of the bird
Remurmured by more beauteous shapes
From wide-world isles, and woods, and capes,
Victims to woman’s folly, sold
By man’s unholy greed of gold.
Woe ! woe ! The Lady’s bed became
A bath of scorching blood and flame !

Too hard to bear, the horror burst
The bondage of the dream accursed.
But yet the Lady slept, then swooned
Into a land half-sunned, half-mooned,
Half-starred. Sad, mute each thing did seem—
Still, brooding, in a dim half-dream :
A land where through had passed in time
The blight of some mysterious crime.

The lone, sweet Lady wandered on
From glade to glade, from zone to zone
Of woodland wonderful to see ;
For, though ’twas summer, on each tree
The blossoms seemed but half in bloom,
Nor did the scene even half-illuminate,
More puzzling still to understand,
There was no music in the land.

A songless world ! Was heard nor seen
One warbler 'mid the leafage green.
The Lady listened, but could hear
No lilt to delight her ear.
She peered into old nests with awe,
And only long-dead younglings saw ;
But, as she stooped o'er one, the bones
Stirred, and did seem to utter moans.

“ Oh, Pity ! Who hath cursed this land ? ”
“ Thou, Lady, of red Plume and Hand !
Look ! ” And the maiden looked, and lo !
Her Plume and Hand, once white as snow,
Were stained with blood. Upon her knees
She dropped, heart-riven with agonies ;
For she remembered her first dream,
And the dread meaning of its theme.

Now, as she knelt upon the ground,
Near her she heard a gentle sound,
And she beheld a helpless thing—
A little bird with broken wing.
And all the pity of her heart
Welled to it, and, with tender art,
She made for it a healing nest
In the soft cradle of her breast.

And she was soothed ; her Hand's red gloom
Once more grew white as lily-bloom.
The glades awoke to life and glee ;
For near and far, from bush and tree,

All birds of glorious form and wing
Began to flit and flash and sing,
Rejoicing that one maid of grace,
Gentle redeemer of their race,
Had cast the damning Plume aside—
Symbol of Vanity and Pride!

Was it the chime of Glasgow bells
That, 'mid the summer-humming dells,
Awoke the Lady from her sleep
Of marvels, strange, divine, and deep?
'Twas even the golden Sabbath day;
And she arose to weep and pray,
Remembering that Diadem
Of thorns in dark Jerusalem:
And evermore unplumed went she,
Lady of sweet Simplicity!

THE MAGICIAN.

Letters are Spirits.

I.

HE sat in no enchanted room
With phantoms hovering in gloom:
Glared from the walls, on brazen rings,
No skulls of dusk Egyptian Kings;

No fumes of spice Arabian
Arose to drowse the sense of man ;
And make him feel, though still a clod,
The easy equal of a god.

II.

He sat within a quiet nook,
Before him an unwritten book,
A man on whose unwrinkled face
Beamed forth mild dignity and grace ;
And on whose brow you might behold
The kingdoms of the world unrolled ;
And in whose eye like heaven serene,
Brooded the seeing and unseen.
Upon a dark oak table lay
The scriptless book of mystic gray :
There lay the inkhorn, there the quill,
The sceptre of the Master's will.
The master smiled as who might say
To servitors who must obey :
"Come forth, ye spirits, once again
And aid me in another strain,
This time more serious, deep, and dark,
Yet lit by many a glowing spark
Of wit and wisdom that shall be
A warning to posterity."
He waved his hand and gazed on space,
A cloud of sternness on his face,
As if he saw beneath some star,

The phantom of a soul at war
With a fell crime, the victim he
Wailing for vengeance dismally.
Grimly the master turned, and there
A crowd of Sprites confused the air,
Going and coming, intertwining
In forms beyond a fool's divining.
"Gently, my darlings; dance in tune,
But to no music of the moon.
A tragic task is ours—to make
A plan for this poor phantom's sake.
So wind about and in and out,
Expel the inartistic doubt,
Take on all forms of grace and truth,
And bind them on that brooding youth
To whose unfixed and saddened mind
The burden of the world is blind,
And makes it one vast grief and moan,
Incurable but by death alone.
But wind about and out and in,
And shape the vengeance for the sin,
Until the youth is roused from dreams
Of love and philosophic themes,
And dedicates his life to death—
To avenge a Sire's arrested breath.

III.

"So, so; well done. Full deftly you
Have helped my thought to fitting hue

And form. Now let me write, and see
Whether the basis may agree
With the great vision I behold
Out of one deadly sin unrolled."
Then for a time the Master there
Sat brooding in the dreaming air,
And writing in the mystic book ;
His pen was like a running brook
And made a music not all sweet,
With many a gurgling jink and beat :
With pauses wherein he seemed lost
In moonlight, haunted by a ghost,
Then did the little spirits swarm
About his head and ear and arm,
And whisper to him, as if they
Would solve the riddle of delay,
And force the action of the brain
To further paces in the strain.
The Master sighed and looked like one
Whose eyes had seen a murder done ;
Yet saw that Fate, through gleam and gloom,
Would track the doer to his doom.
"Thanks, busy workers, you and I
Will triumph in this mystery,
And show it to all coming times
The model of avengèd crimes."

IV.

The noble Master once again
Yoked to the music, yet with pain ;

For as he wrote, there seemed to rise
Between him and the last assize
Of his deep tale, small flies that make
A buzz at palace-gates, and shake
The fabric of resolve in man,
Who dreams and falters in the plan
Set him by sovereignties of thought,
Whose wisdom had been dearly bought
In tragedies of flesh and brain
When life was lowring, and insane
With thoughts that sought the infinite
Through dreams on many a piercing height,
And also in the depths where lay
The secrets of the Gods in clay.
So dreamed the injured youth to whom
The Master had consigned the doom
Of the offender ; halting still,
The victim of twice-thinking will ;
Doubtful of proof, although it came
Straight from the cleansing place of flame.
But still the Master toiled in thought
And bravely towards the issue wrought,
Until, with his fine Spirits he
Hit on the final destiny
Of the abandoned and the base,
Clouders of youth's aspiring days ;
And he and they with shrewd intents,
So moulded the dread elements,
That the conceiver of the crime
Which crazed a noble soul for time,

Being shewn, as in a waking dream
Re-pictured, all his acted scheme,
Fled shrinking, horror at his heels,
A man accursed, whose reason reels
On brinks of self-created hells
Hoarse with the clang of dooming bells.

v.

Thus far the Master's hand had writ
In ever-varying forms of wit :
Blithe Fancy's airy form and gleam
Danced merrily on the whirling stream.
Imagination's searching light
Pierced to the soul of wrong and right
Quick severing, in each page and line,
Divine sense from the undivine ;
And making mortal malice chill
With winds of judgment blowing shrill.
Well pleased, the Master scanned the page,
Darkened with clouds of tragic rage,
And praised his nimble Spirit-band
Who came so featly to his hand,
And gave their being, mind and heart,
To round the record of his art
Immortal, which yet had not been
But for their subtle breath and keen :
Weak are the giants and the Kings
Wanting the aid of humble things.

VI.

Another page the Master turned ;
Round him again the Spirits burned,
Eager to help if still they might,
The story to its tragic height.
Sadly he smiled—as one might seem,
Just wakened from a tender dream
Wherein a beauteous maid and kind,
Beholding death, went crazed in mind,
And singing died. O piteous sight !
Who might have been a King's delight,
And made a Kingdom pure and good
From stainings of a cursed brood.
But never yet was justice done
Under the glory of the sun,
But innocence met tragic fate,
The victim of the wheels of state,
Or the large passion of the time
Which sought to punish crime by crime.

VII.

In vision did the Master see
Those dread events of destiny
Which gathered to a dismal end
In the great doom of foe and friend.
He wrote within his book aghast
At the damned action following fast :
For there the King sat, and the Queen,
She witless of the evil scene

That grew around her, like a charm
Wherein no terror seemed or harm,
But only gaiety of form,
Preluding no red hour of storm.
She only saw her noble son
In nimble rapier-play with one
Who bore a memory of death
'Gainst his opponent: and the King
Sat brooding there, a guilty thing
One murder done, and one to do—
A deed that he would dearly rue.
For quick as lightning went the play
And in two strokes of time there lay
A mass of death: the avenging point
Had found the vulnerable joint,
And down the beast-like monarch fell
From throne to earth, from earth to hell—
A tragic warning to all time
That there is no defeat like crime.

.
The Master wrote a little space,
Then closed the book, and veiled his face.
The spirits vanished sad and pale,
In the last sentence of the tale.
Who was the Master, deep, sublime?
The Poet immortal for all time.
Who were the spirits? who were they?
Letters with which a child might play.
What was the story of the written page?
“Hamlet,” a tragedy for every age.

A BALLAD OF BORDERLAND.

THE Borderland :
Gone is the Bard with staff in hand
Who loved and glorified the theme
In songs that made the welkin gleam ;
Who kindled summer in the mind
Made chill by grief and deeds unkind.
We cannot but remember him,
So bright of eye, so bold of limb,
Who wandered oft in forests old,
And where the brooding ocean rolled,
And where the torrent flashed, and where
The eagle hung an orb in air,—
Indifferent to time or space
Or man's ingratitude or grace.
There learned the Bard to think, and find
The depth and compass of his mind.
He saw the pebble on the shore
The vision of the star restore ;
And in the new lamb's gentle face
A beam of innocence and grace,
And in his baby's wondering eyes
The instant glory of the skies.
Within the skylark's gentle theme
He heard an angel's mightier dream,

Vast breathings from the spheral strand—
The music of the Borderland.

The Borderland :

Ah ! who shall wield the magic wand,
And roll the clouds away, and sing
The beauty of a newer Spring?
Not he, the poet, sweet of tongue,
Who chanted when the years were young
As prophet of the dawn, to whom
Hope ever wore a dancing plume
That caught the earlier beams of time,
Sweet sunlight to his golden rhyme.
Whither he wanders who may guess,
Or free him from the silent stress?
Mayhap he lingers as of yore
On Yarrow Braes or Tweed's green shore,
Holding high converse with the brave
Whose souls still haunt the wood and wave ;
Lamenting in the barren bowers
The absence of the Forest Flowers ;
Mingling poetic strains with those
Whose ballads healed a nation's woes ;
Or sitting, touched with glamourie,
Beneath the witching Eildon Tree
Waiting the ripening of the spells
To bring, with jingling fairy bells,
True Thomas with a new command,
High genius of the Borderland.

The Borderland :

Ah ! where are now the happy band
With whom we sported on the lea,
Or sailed the sparkling summer sea,
Still dreaming of the golden isles
Where beauty wears ethereal smiles ;
Where love is pure, and man is king
Of his own soul in everything ?
Wearied of home-bred things that be,
They seek a far felicity,
While sweet contentment sits at home
And wonders why the heroes roam.
Will they come back and bring with them
A wallet or a diadem ?
Or do they starve in plenteous climes,
Weaving their everlasting rhymes ?
Or have they found ungenerous graves
Where kings are fools and statesmen knaves ?
Or do they live in sceptred state
To show how genius can be great ?
Alas ! I know not ; but I hear
Like murmurs from a happy sphere,
The noble music that they made
As minstrels in their native shade,
When, fiery-tongued, they sang to rout
The deity that prompteth doubt,
Not knowing then that doubt is still
The servant of the Heavenly Will,
And slays more foes of truth and good
Than ever priesthood understood.

They know it now, for they have power
To slip the error of the hour,
And follow forth, or near or far,
Sweet science, the new morning star,
The potent glory of whose beams
Dazzles to death the evil dreams
Which held in thrall the souls of men
For ages in a twilight pen—
Between the dawning and the dark
The screech of owl, the song of lark,
The wind that chilled, the wing that fanned
New life across the Borderland.

The Borderland :

Lo ! where the hills so godlike stand :
Though deep in earth from chaos born
They rear their foreheads to the morn,
And hear within each pulsing gleam
The music of the solar beam.
So our loved bard, though born in Glens,
Outsoars the stature of the Bens ;
And moves, unawed, within the track
Starred by the circling Zodiac :
Unawed, yet solemn-eyed, he sees
Glints of still grander mysteries
Than wisest sage hath ever scanned
In his belovèd Borderland.

THE EAGLET AND THE CHILD.

I.

THE Baron cam' to his castle yett :
 "O wifie, let me in ;
For I wi' rain and bluid am wet,
 And sair and weary-blin'."
His leddy lookit down and saw
 Her dear lord standin' there,
Wi' bluid upon his brow o' snaw,
 And on his yellow hair.

"Whaur hae ye been sae lang and late,
 What deed is't ye hae dune ?"
"I've brought our son an eaglet-mate
 Frae Corriemulzie Linn.
The parent eagles, fierce as fire,
 Did strike me wi' their wings :
I gave them o' my dirk's keen ire,
 And dyed the Corrie's springs.

"But bring babe Ronald forth to see
 This plaything o' the wild—"
Rushed in the nurse—"Oh, wae is me,
 An eagle's stown the child !"

“Awa’, awa’, ye guilty man!”
The anguished mither said;
“’Tis son for son, ’tis ban for ban—
O God that I were dead!”

II.

The eagle cam’ to the wren’s nest:

“O Jenny, are ye in?
Some counsel gie me o’ the best,
For I wi’ grief am blin’.”
And Jenny lookit out and saw
The puir bedraigled king,
Wi’ bluid upon his beak and claw,
And jaups on ilka wing.

“Whaur hae ye been sae late and lang,
What waefu’ deed’s been dune?”

“Oh, we hae tholed a cruel wrang
At Corriemulzie Linn.
The Baron climbed into our nest—
Ower late we saw him there—
And tore our darling frae our breast,
To please his baby heir,

“But I hae played his ain dark game,
And reft his babe frae him.
What will he think when he gangs hame
To find his cradle toom?”

O Jenny, speak and counsel me,
And gie my heart relief;
It boils within me like a sea
Of fire, and rage and grief."

"Awa', awa', ye cruel king,
Wha come for counsel here!
Your bluidy claw, your jaupit wing,
They shake my breast wi' fear:
Awa', and tak' the bairn wi' speed
Unto his mither's knee;
A kindly deed's a kingly deed
That sets the captive free."

III.

The human mither sabbit sair;
While round her and the Chief
The eagle-mither rent the air
Wi' cries o' rage and grief.
"O husband! tak' the eaglet hame
Unto his ain dear nest;
A parent's heart is a' the same
In man or eagle's breast."

The eaglet heard his mither's cry,
And shook his helpless wings,
And screamed a prayer unto the sky,
As to the King of Kings.

The Baron tossed the youngling free
Upon the dial-stane;
Then with a swoop and clutch of glee
The eagle had her ain.

Yet sair and sairer did she greet,
Babe Ronald's mither fair;
"Oh, give me back my son, my sweet,
Ye powers of earth and air!"
"Be comforted, my wife, my joy,
And I'll redeem my sin;
I'll seek and find our darling boy
By Corriemulzie Linn."

But hark!—a sound—a surge of wings,—
O wonder! O delight!
The eagle, son and sire of kings,
Brought hame the baby wight:
Then flashing into heaven wi' speed,
Shrieked forth exultingly,
"A kindly deed's a kingly deed
That sets the captive free!"

AN ANGLER'S FANTASY.

ONE sweet May morn a jewelled fly,
His head one universal eye,
Down silvery Tweed came flashing by.
"A god! A god!" was all the cry
From silly midges dancing nigh.

The fly, enraptured, stooped with speed
To scan his godhead in the Tweed.
"How grand to be a god!" quoth he;
"Is there another god save me?"
In answer, from the subtle pool
A bull-trout snapped the dandy fool,
And as he crunched his bones, said he,
"A god of midges you may be,
But not a god for trout like me;
Of little fish, and midge, and fly
I am a god—a god am I!"

At that bold word, from ambush still,
A Kingfisher, with nimble bill,
Seized the bull-trout and had his fill.
"Be you a god of fins and flies,
I am a god of wings and skies;
I reign outside all bolts and bars—
Mine is the freedom of the stars!"

O proudly then he spread his wings,
This Kingfisher, this king of kings ;
But heavy with two gods inside
Slow were the pinions of his pride ;
And in that cumbrous moment, he
Drained the sad cup of destiny ;
For there, as sleek as lightning, sat
Amid the sedge a couchant cat,
Who made but one electric spring
And took the winged god on the wing,
Who shrieked but once, as ne'er before
Shrieked any god on any shore.

“O Egypt !” purr’d the happy puss ;
“No god am I in conquering thus ;
But I have had a dream erewhile
Of Luxor by the dreamful Nile,
Where, sacred to the Goddess Bast,
My kindred were a special caste.
A pretty bird you are indeed,
Plump Kingfisher, to me at need ;
Be happy in your new abode,
Where I, no god, digest a god,—
And other two besides yourself
Whom you laid on your inner shelf.
A lover of a homely house,
Contented with a casual mouse,
No god, but only cat am I :
And yet my heart leaps to the sky,

As if the gods within aspired
To thrones that I have ne'er desired.
Down, down, ye gods! here I am master—
God if you will—and scorn disaster!"

Alas! that even a cat should blind
Instinct by vanity of mind!
While thus so deep in gods and mice
Her ear became as dull as vice,
And failed to hear among the rocks
The tread and heart beat of a fox.
Yet Reynard, with but half an eye,
Saw everything from cat to fly,
And swore that, spite of seeming odds,
He'd try for once a feast of gods.
So, ere vain puss had time to run,
Her mass of godhead was undone,
Laid bleeding in the self-same place
Where she had shown such lack of grace.
"God, or no god," said Reynard, "this
To me is quite a feast of bliss;
And though I'm neither god nor saint
I could not bear the mortal taint—
The weight of blasphemy and sin
That once filled up this empty skin.
No, no; I'm but a fox, no more;
I wander by Tweed's lovely shore,
And feast on chicken now and then,
And hunt with county gentlemen;

They give me scouth through scaur and bush,
I give them sport, but keep my brush.
They call me cunning dog? My eye!
What fool, to snap bird, fish, or fly,
And let the fly ones snap at me,
To give them gossip for their tea!
I know a thing worth two of that—
I watch the play; and when the cat
Has got the gamesome gods inside
I eat the cat and leave the hide—
Fit fate for vanity and pride!
The victor I, give me the crown!
Ye gods, now ring the curtain down!"

"Not yet, old fox!" and wrapt in flame,
A bullet, shot by thunder, came
And crashed into Sir Reynard's head,
And laid the sly moonlighter dead.
"A pretty shot!" the poacher said,
And took the dead one by the ear
And whispered, "What! you do not hear?
Or will not speak? Come, which is it?
A fox though dead should have the wit
To give the dogs the slip and run,
For I myself have seen it done.
'Twas acting then, I own, while this
Seems actual death, the end of bliss—
Or the beginning, if there be
For foxes immortality.

I doubt it. Yet this cunning beast,
Who oft has played or plagued the priest,
By whom he has been sent to blazes,
Not only 'scaped, but had his praises
Sung by the bards; and on these sods
Last feasted on two brace of gods.
How sweet he looks!—as, though unshriven,
Heaven was in him, or he in heaven.
I'll have him stuffed,—so there's an end—”

“Not so, my lively poaching friend;
I'll take the brute; and you will come
To answer for this final sum
Of your misdeeds; as keeper 'am
Inclined to blast you with a damn
As deep as dungeons. Come away
Before the judge this very day.”
And so they went to Peebles town,
Renowned in ballads of renown,
And stood before the sheriff, who
Questioned the poacher—“Is this true?
Did you assassinate this tod?”
“No, no, my Lord, I shot a god.”
“Blasphemer, do you mock the Court?”
“I could not do so—even in sport,
I do protest my Lord, that I,
Shot nothing but a jewelled fly
That claimed to be a god, the fool!
Was it my fault that from the pool

A trout should grab him, or that he,
This trout, should put on deity?
'Tis true, my Lord, beyond a doubt,
A Kingfisher did snap the trout,
Being himself a god of wings
And several other splendid things.
'Tis also true, the bird became
A banquet to a cat of fame,
Who talked of Egypt, and the time
When cats were in their golden prime,
Or gods themselves—I don't know which.
Good heavens! I almost lost my speech
To hear the silly godlings screech.
Right glad was I when, without din,
The fox put puss inside his skin,
And warbled like a statesman, who
Can prove that white is black or blue.
But tell me, keeper, tell me why
Came Reynard 'tween me and the fly?
Tell me, my Lord, if 'twas his wish
To feast on fly, cat, bird, and fish,
Was it my fault if he forgot
To dodge the purpose of my shot?
Weigh well this vital point—that I
Aimed at a vile blaspheming fly;
And please you, weigh this further score
That, 'stead of one, I slaughtered four,
And thus but rid the world the more
Of fools and brutes. My Lord and friend,
Let justice be your aim and end."

“Keeper, stand forth, and say if you
Can swear this likely tale is true.”

“My lord, I scarce can speak or think :
My very eye has ceased to wink.
The tale may be all true, but I
Am bound to say it looks a lie,
Got up to save this poacher's skin
From consequences of his sin.
Hang me, if I can catch his jokes :
I only know he shot this fox,
And so has spoiled the county sport :
If there is justice in this Court
Let him be punished—let him find
That gods and judges have one mind
When blasphemy is in the wind.”

“Such a strange case,” the Sheriff said,
“Is quite enough to turn one's head ;
I've never known a case like it,
And what to do exceeds my wit.
There's no such case in legal quarters—
Not e'en in Foxe's Book of Martyrs.
The story haunts me like a dream
Of evil on an evil theme.
My brain begins to swim—I'll swear,
If you two stand much longer there.
A single shot to kill four gods
Is more than I'll believe, ye clods !

You're liars both, and should be stripped
And through the town of Peebles whipped.
Begone, ere I grow mad. Yet stay,
And bear my final words away,
A judgment for the Judgment Day—
Accurs'd are they who in their jigs
Offend the gods to please the pigs!"

POEMS

THE TWA FARMERS:

A MODERN IDYLL.

THEY met thegither on a day
When sweet spring winds were blawin',
When happy hens were on the lay,
And canty cocks were crawin'.

"Behold how fresh the land, and fair!"
Said Sandy to his cronie;
"There's hope and honey in the air,
And buddin' flowers are bonnie."

"Ay, ay," said Jamie, "things look weel,
Thanks to the ploughs and harrows,
But yet my heid is in a creel,
In thinking' o' the sparrows.

"Deil skin and roast the greedy birds
Last year they picked me sairly;
My crap o' corn was but twa thirds
I'm feared they'll rook me fairly.

“But I hae been into the toon,
And bocht new guns and poother,
And I will gie the rogues a stoon,
Wi’ fireflaughts frae the shoother.

“I’ll mak’ their feathers flee like clouds
When autumn blows alarmers,
And lay them in their yellow shrouds
For robbin’ honest farmers.

“Then I’ll hae gowden craps ilk year—
Kind Providence the giver—
To bring me routh o’ guid and gear,
Blest be His name for ever!”

“Ah, Jamie, you are mighty wrang;
For if you kill the birdies,
My faith, you’ll sing anither sang,
Wi’ nae breeks on your hurdies.

“Disturb not nature’s honest laws;
Weel are they worth the wooin’;
Despise them,—she’ll assert her cause
To your sair heart’s undoin’.

“The sparrows, doos, and e’en the craws,
Are workers wi’ their Maker;
He makes them, and He fills their maws,
And you are His caretaker.

“Beware, O Jamie, what you do !
The birds are freens, I rede you ;
They eat the grubs that would eat you,
And leave nae ‘grub’ to feed you.”

“Halt, Sandy ! you are gaun ower far ;
You’re but a kailyard prophet,
Ruled by a sentimental star,
And get sma’ comfort of it.

“You love the speugs—they steal your corn ;
The doos—they also do it ;
The very craws—they laugh to scorn
Your love, and you shall rue it.

“Gang hame, dear Sandy, tak’ your gun,
And shoot the feathered randies ;
And you’ll hae fouth as weel’s your fun,
And dress like wealthy dandies.”

But Sandy mind’t a thing or twa
That Jamie had forgotten ;
For he shot a’ the birds awa’,
And soon his craps were rotten.

And Sandy’s farm is blithe wi’ wings,
And yet his craps are heavy ;
While every bird that cheeps or sings
Is free to pick its levy.

And Jamie? He gaed doon the brae,
Unpitied by the birdies;
And realised shrewd Sandy's say
About his houghs and hurdies.

He left the country for the toon,
Wi' his puir wifie Sarah,
And sell't thin milk, the silly loon,
And cam' before the Shirra.

But Sandy, true in brain and blood,
A buirdly Scottish yeoman,
Is aff across the ocean flood,
To quell the Boer foeman.

Sae let us sing, "Guid save the Queen!
And keep her hale and hearty!"
Gie her the sicht that heals sair e'en—
One Nation and one Party.

. Noo, a' ye patriots round about,
A' ye that plough and harrow,
Wae, wae to you, if you should rout
The Providential Sparrow!

OLD BALLAD-MAKER.

THEY triumph in their giddy spheres,
 The fashionable fools of time ;
 They lend no sweetness to the years,
 Yet live in many a brazen rhyme—
 For thee, dear Rhymer, not one chime.

Yea, one—I give thee one, old friend ;
 Not loud that all the world may hear,
 But true—truth never hath an end,
 Like fawning words that please the ear
 One silly hour, then disappear.

Thy name and fame! If known to three
 True-hearted comrades of the clan,
 What need'st thou more for time to be—
 The ring-like history of man,
 That ever ends where it began?

Had any man a kindly heart?
 It was not kindlier than thine ;
 Or nobler—though, by tricks of art,
 Base pebbles from a shallow mine,
 Being set in gauds, like jewels shine.

Had any Sage the art of truth ?
That art was thine, with all its pains ;
In age, as in thy fervent youth,
Thou scorned'st the fruitful lie, whose gains
Are curses worse than galling chains.

So came it that the slaves of writ
Scourged thee, but could not break thy mind ;
For wickedness, thou gav'st them wit,
And sent them limping to their kind,
The mean of heart, the halt and blind.

So came it that when death drew near,
He did not dare to strike thee dead,
But paused, as one in doubt and fear ;
And when he turned, thy soul had sped,
Snatched by the Spirit of Life instead.

Wherefore I mourn thee not at all,
For still thou livest, sweet and whole,
No spoil of any fiend, or thrall :
The holy heavens alone control
The poet's song, the poet's soul !

Thou shinest 'mong the good and great,
Old ballad-maker, true and good,
Exalted above fame and state,
And flattering friend and foeman rude :
Poet by poets understood.

RHYMES FOR SNOWDROPS.

THANKS, fairy maiden Marguerite,
 For your white saints of all the flowers :
 They make my ancient bosom beat
 As in those far romantic hours
 When my young muse took wing,
 And first began to sing.

Though you, my dear, were yet unborn,
 There came a calm prophetic morn,
 With prelude of a tender birth
 That was to charm and cheer the earth
 And make it new, and pure, and fair,
 And glorify the common air
 With light and love and loveliness—
 Nay, do not blush, when I confess
 'Twas you who, from dim wonderland,
 Brought Heaven in your baby-hand.

And now, when I am old, and you
 Are young and exquisite and true,
 Right pleasant 'tis that I should find
 Reminder of another mind—
 Your post-kinsman's, wherein he
 Wise in the art of Poesy,

Grew flower-like songs and song-like flowers,
Rhyme-symbols of his garden-bowers
That bloomed to his instinctive hand,
As at shrewd Nature's own command.
To you has come, by right descent,
The genius of the floral bent :
So where you walk with gentle feet,
Upspring the flowers and call you sweet—
Sweet Marguerite ! Sweet Marguerite !
For well they know that you will send
Their blossoms to your Poet-friend—
To me, your lover—still, though old
Dreamer of rhymes and times of gold,
Where shepherds pipe their flocks to fold,
On the green Fells that you behold !

SPRING AT BROUGHTON.

BUTTER and eggs and flowers !—
Thanks for your gifts, my dear :
They tell of precious hours
In many a gracious year,
Gone,—but remembered still,
Nay,—never to be forgot,
So long as life hath will,
And will a kindly thought.

Flowers and butter and eggs!—

Beautiful, sweet, and pure,
Odorous of green seggs,
Daisy, meadow, and moor.
I hear the burnie pour
Over the Broughton Weir,
Blackbirds sing at the door,
Cuckoos far and near.

Eggs and flowers and butter!—

Delicate, spotless, fine :
Silver the words I utter,
For golden deeds of thine.
Biggar flows to the Tweed,
Tweed rolls down to the sea ;
But O, my dear, I speed
In sweet spring dreams to thee.

A DIRGE.

ARE you asleep, Helen?
How pale, pale your cheek !
How dreary my dwellin',
Since you ceased to speak !

The light hath departed,
And I am tear-blind,
Alone, broken-hearted,
And darkened in mind.

Helen, will you waken,
And ope your dear eyes?
Know you I'm forsaken,
And hope in me dies?

O sorrow ! pale blossom !
Dead Helen ! you seem
A dream in my bosom,
A rose in a dream.

Burd Helen, Burd Helen,
Since death is so sweet,
I'll come to your dwellin'
And lie at your feet.

Our hearts that were riven
Shall heal and be whole,
And in the kind heaven
Soul mingle with soul.

ROBERT BURNS.

(Glasgow, January 25, 1877.)

ROBIN, Robin, lo! 'tis your day,
The Janwar day when you were born!
We love you still, as well we may;
For still you give us smiles and tears,
And sweetness to keep green the years,
To strengthen hopes, to conquer fears:
And now, in spite of spite and scorn,
You rear your brow into the morn,
Bold, unforlorn,
Robin, Robin.

Robin, Robin, with happy mind
We bless the heavens that sent you here,
When men were deaf and dumb and blind,
And could not hear dear Nature sing,
Nor touch love's tender human string,
Nor see in each free man a king,
Till thrilled by you—man without fear:
Then woke the land, all eye, all ear,
Tongue, trumpet-clear,
Robin, Robin.

Robin, Robin, behold we come
To laurel you, our Bard-king, there—
Song-silent 'mid the passionate hum :
Silent ! nay, but your lips of bronze
Shall start a living soul from stones,
With Liberty's eternal tones,
And wake us from our mean despair
To breathe the patriot's glorious air,
Stern, glad, and fair,
Robin, Robin.

Robin, Robin, ring out your voice ;
Kindle anew the flame of song ;
And make the common world rejoice
At right made might, at galling chains
Falling beneath truth's lightning strains,
At life made rich by honest gains,
At tyrants lashed with their own thong,
And nations trampling lie and wrong,
Manly and strong,
Robin, Robin.

A RETROSPECT.

WE sat together, my love and I,
And watched the passing spring;
We saw her spread her magic hand
And deck each earthly thing;
We saw her glide o'er hill and dale,
We smiled while birds did sing;
We sat together, my love and I,
And watched the passing spring.

We sat together, my love and I,
When summer suns did glow,
Where gentle zephyrs fan the cheek,
And myriad wild flowers grow;
Where fragrance fills the balmy air,
And murmuring waters flow;
We sat together, my love and I,
When summer suns did glow.

We sat together, my love and I,
When fruit hung o'er the glen,
We watched the hips and haws grow red
And rowan-clustered stem;
The bramble, hazel, and the slæe
All sweet fruition, then;
As we sat together, my love and I,
When fruit hung o'er the glen.

We sat together, my love and I—
The year was getting old—
We listened to its dying moans
And felt its bitter cold;
We marked new scenes 'midst snow and ice,
Yet did the joys unfold;
As we sat together, my love and I,
When the year was getting old.

We sit together, my love and I,
The seasons come and go,
Our life is still a springtime
'Midst flower, 'midst fruit, and snow,
Our thoughts are bathed in sunshine
As the days they ever go;
We sit together, my love and I,
As we did long, long ago.

BALLOCH WOODS.

TO THE GLASGOW BALLAD-MAKERS.

PRAISE to the Lord of Balloch Woods,
Who kindly opened his magic gates
To us, who love old solitudes,
Where deep-eyed Poesy haunts and broods,
And patiently on the minstrel waits—
Too often wildered by the Fates.

For we who in the city fare
And over rustic ballads croon,
Were fain to breathe a sweeter air,
And look on landscapes golden rare,
One ripe October afternoon—
Gay gipsy Autumn's mellowing boon.

And so we took our pilgrim staff,
And left the city in jocund trim,
Eager of Beauty's cup to quaff,
And hear the limpid waters laugh
And bubble, at many an emerald brim,
And brown bees hum a sombre hymn.

We saw the Clyde's far-shining miles,
Thronging with many a merchant ship,
Bound for the underworld of isles,
Where artless Beauty dreams and smiles,
And song is sweet on virgin lip
That doth of virgin honey drip.

We saw the Castle, grand and gray,
Old warder of the river old,
Revolting at that basest day
When, scarred by lightning, gashed by fray,
It was the Hero's dungeon-hold—
The Patriot by the Traitor sold.

Then wound we up the Leven Vale,
And met the river sparkling down
Through regions rich with warlike tale,
And many a song of woe and wail,
When clansmen earned their red renown,
And shocked the Kirk and shook the Crown.

Yet we beheld a peaceful scene,
Recalling happier deeds and days,
When youngsters sported on the green,
Or plunged in Leven, crystal clean,
Or on its green banks chanted lays
That gave to love and valour praise.

And there was one, a bright-eyed boy,
The leader of the youthful clan,
The master of their daily joy,
Their guardian from the world's annoy—
Prefiguring a noble man,
To realise the rede that ran.

Soon Smollett filled a larger scene,
Best wit and humorist of his day;
In "Roderick" and "Peregrene"
Men found salvation for the spleen:
Courage in his heroic lay,
Which thrilled beyond all bugle-play.

Freeman, he sang of Freedom high—
The "Lion-hearted, eagle-eyed"—
When scarce a star in Europe's sky
Dared twinkle like a human eye,
Lest thrones should crumble in their pride—
Nor did all tyrant powers abide.

His spirit haunts this valley still,
As from the Lake the Leven gleams;
Still shines the glory on each hill
That made him strong and quick of will
To weave his comedy of dreams,
Making real life from life that seems.

For here he roamed, as now we roam,
The pathways of sweet Balloch Woods;
For Scottish Muse no lovelier home,
For Patriot thoughts no grander dome,
Than Lomond's peaks and solitudes,
Glorious in every season's moods.

Dear Minstrels of this later time,
How happy were it if we might
Awake one corresponding chime
To that which fired our Smollett's rhyme
For Liberty and Human Right,
And for our own dear land's delight!

At least, here, by this Lomond Lake—
 A very heaven of starry Isles—
 We may, for Queen¹ and Country's sake
 Into our burning memory take
 Our heroes, in their far-off toils,
 Battling for rights and not for spoils.

Beloved Bards, for you remain
 The pregnant years that hither hie;
 For you the nobler strife and strain,
 For you no glory vast and vain,
 But conquests in pure melody---
 When I beneath the daisies lie!

WHITE DOUGLAS

(FOR A GRANDCHILD.)

TOO often when Black Douglas came,
 The landscape blushed in blood and flame.
 When the White Douglas touched the land,
 Fresh palms of peace were in his hand.
 When the Black Douglas marched away,
 Woe, want, and weeds behind him lay.
 When the White Douglas ope'd his eyes,
 New mercy bloomed in the old skies.

¹ Queen Victoria was living when this poem was written.

When the Black Douglas wished a crown
In wreck and death his star went down.

But the White Douglas, hither blown,
In every bosom found a throne ;
So, Baby Douglas, Christ-like-sweet,
Hath all the kingdoms at his feet.

AN INVITATION.

UP, Walter ! fling your palette down,
Away, away to Kenmuir Wood :
Let's flee the ghost of Glasgow town
In that green shadowy solitude :
White-kirtled May is at the door ;
With all her sweet throats round her singing
The meads she trips so lightly o'er,
With starry buds are softly springing ;
And voices and echoes are laughing and ringing.

Clyde whirls in silvery cadence down
Through emerald gleams of Kenmuir Wood :
The banks, in winter cold and brown,
Are greening into blithesome mood :
The primrose lamps each aislèd nook,
Careless whether it is beholden ;
The rustling leaves in Nature's book
Whisper with voices subtle and golden,
Oracles new and oracles olden.

Come, Walter, come, and with you bring
Robert the Bard, to Kenmuir Wood :
For is it well that birds should sing
Unheard by singers of human brood ?
Or is it wise that love-eyed flowers
Should bloom in dells by us unhaunted ?
It soothes the soul's untender powers,
To gaze at beauty, pure unvaunted,
And only by wandering breezes chanted.

Then, Robert the Poet, you and I
Will leave the stalls of merchant-men ;
Trip o'er the Green, the Bridge, and hie
Through the ancient town of Rutherglen ;
By Eastfield, and by Silverbank,
Nestling amid their saughs gigantic,
Where Miners' children, glad and frank,
Take life as 'twere an endless antic,
Wise as Kings, as madmen frantic.

Then shall we jog through Cambuslang,
Where shuttles whisk from light to gloom ;
Where housewives spin, and anvils clang,
And briskly breathes the humming loom.
And turning northward from the town,
Through lanes o'erhung with hawthorn hedges,
Where Kirkburn sings o'er pebbles brown,
Seek we the pools, the lapsing ledges,
Where violets dream o'er grassy edges.

Say, shall we pause in Westburn Wood,
Whose leafy shades, so cool and calm,
Were a bower of bliss for maidenhood
In morns of youth when life is balm?
The streamlet lingers in the glen,
The love-smit dove is softly cooing ;
And many a sylvan denizen,
Brimming with love, is love pursuing—
And heaven and earth themselves are wooing.

But up ! away ! and through the ford,
And o'er the sward to sweet Carmyle ;
Meal-white, the Miller is yet the lord,
By right of gear and genial smile.
Close-hid in green the clachan sleeps ;
Drowsed by the mill's sonorous drumming,
Each slumb'rous tree embosomed keeps
A mouth of gold, whose mellow humming
Sounds like a sea-voiced murmur coming.

Beneath the wide-vann'd elm tree stands
A cozy inn whose hostess hale
Will bring with fresh red country hands
Crisp oaten cakes and golden ale :
These are the cakes to Scotland dear ;
That ale was brew'd by Bass the Brewer :
Oat cakes and ale are Christian cheer,
Nor can be a wise man's undoer,
But make his heart beat sweeter and truer.

Walter—Robert—shall this be so?

Or shall we straight to Kenmuir Wood,
And leave the Miller's daughter in woe,
Her curls untoss'd from her amber snood?
Nay, as you please. Your will is mine:
The cakes and ale may lie untasted;
The lass who haunts this nook divine
May keep her coils of curls unwasted—
A bliss to come should ne'er be hasted.

Yet linger, comrades!—pause awhile;
And take the blessing of the scene:
Look at the gleams for mile on mile
Of blooms, and waters, and glints of green!
List to sounds from height and holm—
Whistling, calling, and clear cock-crowing!
And see the scimitar flash of foam
That cuts the river across in flowing!—
Weir-stroke of the Miller to keep wheels going.

The sun now strikes the peak of noon:
The daisy thrills with radiance through;
The lark pours out a silvery tune,
Like rain on murmurous bells of blue:
The wood-birds twinkle about the trees;
The young hares sun their ears 'tween the ridges;
The flowers are making a feast for the bees;
The swallow-tragedian slayeth the midges;
The pendulous spider builds realms on old bridges.

But follow ! follow ! Lo ! the way,
Where buds adore each wrinkled root,
Like youngers, pure as lambs in May,
Shining at ancient grandam's foot :
Now airily thread the woodland screen
Boskily dim, through dell and dingle,
Where oft the star-like fairies have been,
On moony meads to dance and mingle
Their silvery glees to ravish and tingle.

Is that the wind that sweetly sighs ?
Or tranced whisper of the stream
Still gliding through this paradise,
Sweet peace within each veiled gleam ?
O softly comes the May-blown wind,
Lispably rolleth the seaward river :
But sweeter than the odorous wind,
Or longing sea-sigh of the river,
Is yon green-lipp'd spring that murmurs forever !

O beauteous Spring ! O witching Well !
Angel of stillness, breathing peace !
Thy home is touch'd with love's own spell,
And makes my heart's deep calm increase :
Above thee hangs the bowering trees ;
Before thee, Clyde flows downward gleaming ;
Beyond, in green ambrosial leas,
Which milky daisies are faintly creaming,
Indolent kine are dozing and dreaming.

BIRD SONG.

BLACKBIRD, O Blackbird,
What makes you sing sae clear?
“I sing, for aye my heart sings,
In springtime o’ the year:
I sing to please my dearie,
At hame in yonder tree,
Within our nest sae cosie,
Sae dear to her and me.”

Laverock, O Laverock,
What makes you sing sae sweet?
“I sing, for aye my heart sings,
In sunshine or in weet:
I sing to please my dearie,
At hame on yonder lea,
A heaven o’ wings and daisies,
Sae dear to her and me.”

Ploughman, O Ploughman,
What makes you sing sae bold?
“I sing, for aye my heart sings,
In cloud or sun or cold:
I sing to please my dearie,
The flower o’ yonder farm:
Her lips are opening roses,
Her een a heavenly charm.’

Milkmaid, O Milkmaid,
What makes you lilt sae fine?
"I lilt, for aye my heart lilt,
In shadow or in shine:
I lilt to please my dearie,
The Ploughman brave and free;
He lo'es me, and I lo'e him,
My guidman soon to be."

THE PEESEWEEP INN.

(October 1880.)

COME all ye Ballad-makers bold, and listen unto
me,
And I shall chant the adventures of our Eighteen-
eighty spree
Upon a golden Saturday, October twenty-three.
Not in the sombre city did we measure out the
time
Nor yet in any clachan where the anvils ring in
rhyme,
But ower Gleniffer Braes sae green, dear Paisley
town abune,
And beneath the cosie roof-tree o' the PeesewEEP
Inn.

Though misty was the morn, we laughed ; for, lo ! the
big brave sun
Was fighting for the Rhymers, and we knew the battle
won—
By lightning lance-play of his beams the heavenly feat
was done.

So when at length we met, and took our seats
within the train,
The very steeples laughed in gold to see the sun
again ;
And we were glad, and sang even to the buckles
in our shoon,
Beholding, visioned in the blue, the PeesewEEP Inn.

Oh, lovely was the sky that day ; yet lovelier was the
earth,
With silvered grass, and tawny leaves, and many-
mingled mirth ;
For 'mid the odorous cloud we blew Wit sparkled into
birth.

And when we came to Paisley town, the folk were
blythe and kind,
And oped the richest fountains of the wine-vat
and the mind ;
They gave us of the best they had with Friend-
ship's cup and spune,
And sent us forth in glory to the PeesewEEP Inn.

So we gaed up the Causeyside, a merry band and
braw,

Through Maxwellton and Meikleriggs, by Stanley's
tower and shaw,
And surely 'twas a Poet's dream, the wondrous sight
we saw ;
For, lo ! beneath us, vale, lake, tower, toil's
temples every one,
Glowed dreamlike in the yellow light thick flow-
ing from the sun ;
And there, enraptured, we had stayed until the
day was dune,
Had not a voice cried "Onward, to the Peese-
weep Inn !"

"Yet pause awhile," a whisper ran ; "behold, upon the
Brae

A basely-wounded fountain,¹ standing silent by the
way—

So like an aged minstrel-man by wrong made dumb
and grey."

"The Vandal hath been here," said one, "and
done this deed of shame ;

O miserable Vandal, live for ever without name !

The Rambler smiles in pity ; but we Rhymers
curse your sin,

And shall rouse the world against you at the
Peeseweep Inn !"

¹ A fountain erected to the memory of Hugh Macdonald, author of *Rambles Round Glasgow*, etc., etc. Some evil-disposed persons having all but destroyed the Memorial, it has been removed from the Braes and erected in Glasgow Green.

The guidwife o' the PeesewEEP Inn, more kind is she
and free
Than any hostess in the land of any hostelrie;
There's welcome in her country hand and in her saft
blue e'e;
And as, all hunger-haunted, we beheld her from
afar,
She wore her white mutch like a queen and
cheered us like a star;
Nae need had we to ring a bell or tirl at ony
pin,
For a' the doors were open at the PeesewEEP Inn.

The Inn was shining but-and-ben, and—joy of mortal
man!
The sweet-voiced muse of bacon skirled within the
frying-pan,
A more tooth-melting song than aught since singing
first began.
And through the house, and round the house, the
Ballad-makers thronged,
With here a verse and there a verse, till all the
house was songed;
With here a dram and there a dram, till thrilled
from soul to skin,
Each dreamed himself in heaven at the PeesewEEP
Inn.

The feast was spread, and down we sat, all eager for the
fray;

The guidwife kens what piles of ham and eggs we
 stowed away,
And how the cakes and scones took wing like birds
 frae aff a brae,
And how the amber Asian stream ran rippling
 half an hour,
Chased by a Scottish cataract of more essential
 power ;
And how inspired we then reclined, like gods
 upon a bin
Crowned with ambrosial visions at the PeesewEEP
 Inn.

At length each tongue was tipped with fire ; we made
 the welkin ring
With ballad, sang, and crack, and speech, and many
 a merry jing—
Cocks crowed, hens dropped prophetic eggs in the
 green lap of Spring.
A bumper to the Queen we quaffed, God bless
 Her Majestie !
We quaffed a bumper to ourselves, and wha sae
 guid as we ?
We tossed a bumper to the Bards wha made the
 greatest din,
Both far awa' and nearabout the PeesewEEP Inn.

Then out into the night we stept—heavens ! how the
 planets reeled !

The blaze of moon-girt Jupiter flashed o'er us like a
shield ;
And belted Saturn old rolled dim upon a larger field ;
And from the low north-east wheeled up the
golden mottled moon ;
And westward, in a dream of stars, the Milky
Way did swoon ;
While eager in the far south-east Orion raised his
chin,
In time to hear our farewell to the PeesewEEP
Inn.

Now fare-ye-well, dear cosie Inn ! dear gaucie guid-
wife, too !
And may your girnel ne'er be toom, your tappit hen
aye fu' ;
And ever may your frying-pan make music for the
true !
Farewell ! but we shall come again, ere yet the
wingèd throng
Have burst upon you from the south, and stormed
the world with song ;
When one clear voice is on the moor—by sun,
and star, and mune !
You'll find us with the peeseweeps at the Peese-
weep Inn !

IN A CHURCHYARD.

MORE cause there is to love than dread
The calm deep silence of the dead :
They knew not when alive that they
Were fools of speech from day to day.
Now wordless, yet how wise they be,
Bound in one mute fraternity !

REPLIES.

LET them doubt and despond,
Seeing nothing beyond,
And deride the sweet vision I see ;
Well I know they are wrong,
By the spell of the song
That the skylark is singing to me.

Let them say in their haste
That e'en beauty is waste,
And is only a phantom of charms ;
But I know they are wrong,
By the rapturous song
That my darling's heart sings in my arms.

Let them sneer and declare
Marriage bonds are a snare,
 Hanging chains on the neck of the free ;
Oh, I know they are wrong,
By the prophet-like song
 That my baby-son sings on my knee !

THE LIBERATOR.

HE strode into the market-place,
 Blithe master of the singing art,
The light of music in his face,
The lord of music in his pace,
 The lilt of music in his heart.

Free lover of a people free,
 The people blessed him when he came :
He soothed their pangs with melody
Of love and truth and liberty ;
 And kindled hope's eternal flame.

The master smiled, as in a dream
 Of ancient days when life was young ;
When he, inspired by glint and gleam
Of sun, and moon, and star, and stream,
 Warbled with bably-babbling tongue.

Warbled! O yet with power unfit
To shape his dreams as they should be,
Long bondman of his bounded wit,
Till in him like a star was lit
The fire of art that made him free.

Then sang he round the world, and men
Rushed forth to hear the master sing:
He wiled the wretched from their den,
He drew dusk Ishmael from his fen,
And made him kin with Christ the King

Now moved he in the market, where
Soft trills of music charmed his ear,
As if he breathed delicious air,—
A song to heal a soul's despair,
And lift it to a heavenly sphere.

And who the singers? Who but they,
The songsters of the wood and mead,
Trapped by the spoiler for a prey,
Reft from the joyance of the day,
Sold for a price by human greed.

The master burned with rage: he knew
That freedom was the soul of song,
And song the soul of life, and threw
A ransom to the merchant crew,
And so redeemed the minstrel throng.

He oped their bars : he gave them wing
To wander over land and sea :
“Go, gentle brothers, soar and sing ;
Carol and make the rhyme-bells ring
Freedom to dungeoned misery !”

THE POET.

HEAR the proud statesman, how he calls !
See the mailed warrior march in gleams !
Mark the gemmed Sultan rolled in shawls !
And without moan
The wandering poet wrapped in dreams.

A thousand years in humble dust
Those three have ceased from right and wrong ;
Their honours and their deeds are rust :
The poet alone
Lives in the glory of his song !

THREE VOICES.

I.—CYNIC TO POET.

HAD you been wise, you never had been poor,
Or knocked unanswered at a Christian door.
Why did you not in youth add store to store,
Knowing how fame by wealth is made secure;
How genius even with fame is never sure
Of being statued upon any shore;
How ragged virtue is a thing impure;
And guinealess piety a saintly bore?
Go to! your honesty's a blank; your purse
Is penniless; your feet and back are bare.
Since you have earned but blows from Fortune's rod,
Die like a man, and leave the world your curse!
Heavens! how you start, like any king! and glare
With glorious eyes, as if you were a god!

II.—POET TO CYNIC.

What voice is this that counsels with a sneer,
To end a life that fails to gather pence?
Surely in poverty is no offence?
Surely in mintage is no magic gear
To buy salvation in another sphere,
Where only grace and worth make competence?

Bare feet, bare back! Not these, but this, I fear—
Naked of heavenly knowledge going hence.
Who lives on less than little may be rich;
An empire's revenues o'erspent make poor:
'Tis not the crown, but the king's heart, is king,
And rears him high or rolls him in the ditch.
At councils of the gods I sing secure,
And all the stars sing with me as I sing.

III.—SAGE TO CYNIC AND POET.

Patience, brave friends! though hard it is to wait
The crowned event you wish that never comes,
While rude souls blow their trumps and beat their
drums
Over mean trophies at a brazen gate,
Where supple knees slip down on new estate.
Rather be poor, good hearts, than rich with sums
Earned by no deed of worth. Sweet are life's crumbs
To him who hungers through an honest fate!
Hope still remains, though far behind we pace
In the long progress led by dancing plume,
And glancing spear adown the jubilant wind.
Something there is to give us heart and grace:
The proud must serve the Moulder of their doom;
God serves the humble-true, though halt and blind.

FLIGHT OF THE BALLAD-MAKERS.

(September 1881.)

TO the wood and the wild and the valley,
To the Glenland and Benland, away !
From the bonds of the town let us sally,
In the sweetness of freedom, one day.
For what though the welkin is pouring
Its waters like silvery wine,
And the burnies are rushing and roaring
Under bracken, and boulder, and pine :
Why, we are not knights of the tassel,
Gay jerkin, and slipper, and hose,
Or mice of the counter or castle,
Or sprigs of the water of rose.
We are men, and we love the wild weather ;
We are makers of ballads and songs ;
We are knights of the Thistle and Heather,
And we sing for the righting of wrongs.
Then away, like the flower of good fellows,
Ballad-winged, eagle-minded, like fire ;
Never yet fell the torrent could quell us,
Or quench our song-kindled desire.

Shine, star of high courage and song,
And cheer us in tempest and wrong !

Lo! now the sleek town is behind us,
 Sprawling snug on the hearthstone of ease:
 Bold Muse, seldom so may you find us,
 But roaming by rivers and seas;
 Often rambling with tawny September,
 Humming songs of the summer gone by—
 Songs good for the heart to remember
 When the warblers have dropped from the sky;
 Or stalking through heather and stubble,
 With a gun and a setter of *nous*—
 Oh, sweet are the toil and the trouble
 Of winding the partridge and grouse!
 Or dreaming by hoar-flowing fountains,
 Tarn-born on the moorlands afar,
 That sing the free songs of the mountains
 As they leap through the gorge and the scar;
 Or sitting on crags in the Highlands,
 Above the mean things of the earth,
 Like stars on their thrones in the skylands,
 Where the spirit of freedom had birth!

 Winged spirit of freedom and song,
 Uplift us from meanness and wrong!

Stay, Singers, and answer my comment:
 As the breakers and righters of wrongs,
 It is fit that we tipple one moment,
 Having jewelled an hour with our songs?
 Lo! pat to our quest swings the inn-door,
 Right under the kirk o' Strathblane:

Ah, surely there can't be a sin-door,
Under shadow so sacred and sane.
Drown the storm in the pools of the glasses,
And with it sink trouble of heart,—
Not the thrills from the lips of the lasses,
But the spites and the envies of art.
Heaven save us from blinding pretension,
That struts like a bantam on thrones ;
And give us the starry invention
That triumphs in bondage and moans ;
And moveth through circles of duty
Here, or where, on the sun-seeking height,
Faith kindles the altar of beauty,
And truth is its blossom of light.

Soul of faith and of beauty and song,
Redeem us from darkness and wrong !

No more, Singers : down with the flagon ;
Enough is for wisdom ; away
Through the rain-misty glades of Ballagan,
Where twilight is wrestling with day.
Behold, where the Mountain-Spout streameth,
Like the beard of a god in the wind ;
While over and under it dreameth
Large visions, the all-making Mind.
And hear ye the ballad-like pulses
Articulate, beating like rhyme
With the throb of the Fall that convulses
To poesy, the forest sublime ?

No rill is a casual truant,
 Or casual the ballad it sings;
 Each frolicsome ripple, though fluent,
 Has a will, like a being with wings;
 And the rill, and the stream, and the river,
 With the soul, and the thought, and the song,
 Shall mingle at last, and for ever
 Ring out the death-ballad of wrong.

Deep Muse of far-seeing and song,
 Sing down the high temples of wrong!

Spur steed through the woodlands of Lennox,—
 They are fair lands, and sweet lands, and rich:
 For the curses that haunted their green nooks
 Have vanished with warlock and witch;
 And the freebooters, reiving and killing,
 No longer swoop down from their glens,
 But delve by the bothie and shieling,
 Or shepherd their flocks on the bens.
 And healed are the scar and the sorrow
 Of the feuds of a barbarous time,
 For the spade and the plough and the harrow
 Have banished the sword from our clime;
 And instead of the bale-fire's defiance,
 And the wild bugle-shriek in the night,
 The stars of religion and science
 Lead the march in the triumph of right:
 And the Muse that inspires the procession
 Flings around her a seminal song,

Whose music shall wither oppression,
And crumble the kingdoms of wrong.

Great Maker of singer and song,
Shoot arrows of fire on the wrong !

Lo ! the clachan !—the end of the foray ;
And the inn ! like a nest in the glen,
Where the waters their ballads of glory
Sing, and challenge the ballads of men.
And lo you ! as lovely a maiden
As ever drew ballad from bard !
Oh sweet be her wooin' and weddin',
And a ballad-knight's bosom her guard !
Pass the cup ! Though the storm peaks lean o'er us,
And the cataracts roar from the steep,
The far-piercing note of our chorus
Shall startle men-gods from their sleep,
And make them rub eyes and remember
That crowns meanly worn are undone ;
And light into life each dull ember
Of soul, till it beam like the sun.
Unblest is the spirit that slumbers
While Liberty bleeds in one thong !
Divine is the ballad whose numbers
Are charms for the healing of wrong.

Sing, spirits of music and song,
For the dawn of a day without wrong !

LIFE AND DEATH.

NOTHING so frightens men like death—
The absence of a little breath;
It is so awful not to be,
To sink into vacuity,
And never once again
Behold the face of men.

But what if life should be like night,
And death a waking into light?
Were it not beautiful to find
Another birth, a larger mind,
And see with other eyes
Skies opening still on skies?

Courage! Be sure, whate'er is said,
That but this body can be dead;
And that this mind, a half-blown flower,
Shall grow in loveliness and power!
For still to grow and bloom
Is the divinest doom.

THE HERETIC.

WHO is the heretic?
The man who hath the wit
To find a truth, and follow it
Through all its subtle tissues
Unto its rightful issues :
Whether, in following, his strength be spent,
And all his fortune rent ;
Whether he be hungry and ill-clad,
And his kinsfolk call him mad ;
Or the rich refuse to fee him,
Or the pious flee him,
Or the priest to marry him,
Or, when he dies, to bury him :
 He is the Heretic ;
 And worse, to the cool,
 Wise world, a fool !
 But he is God's fool !
For what does it matter—
The folly and the clatter,
The lifted eyebrow, the cold shoulder,
And the word that is colder ;
The withering curse
Of a penniless purse ;
Poverty and its rags,
Hunger and its jags ;
The public shame
Of a branded name ;

Or the merciless fire
Of the priest's mean ire?
What matter all these woes
If within him glows
The heavenly beauty
Of completed duty?
Above or beneath the sod,
The fool is with God.

THE MAID OF THE ISLES.

SWEET is the voice of the western sea,
As it breaks, and ripples, and smiles;
But sweeter far is the voice to me
Of the maid of the soft green Isles—
The maid, the maid of the Isles.

Fair are the forests in western lands,
As they toss their branches so free;
But fairer is she who dwells by the sands,
The maid of the Isles of the sea—
The maid, the maid of the sea.

Dear are the glens, the lakes, and the bens,
But sweeter and dearer is she—
The lass in whose eye is the blue of the sky;
My joy of the western sea—
My love and light of the sea.

NOTES OF MEMORY.

TO JULIAN.

IN glad imagination, dearest Friend,
With thee at dawn into the woods I wend,
Where oft in volant youth we two have gone,
Just when the joyous, many-mingled tone
Of Nature's simple quires melodious rose—
A morning hymn for blessed night's repose.
Beat then our hearts with all the mystic hopes
That beckon upward to ideal slopes.
Before our eyes, with ever-brightening face,
Arose the future like a dream of grace.
For all things true and beautiful we felt
A loving kindness, and our bosoms melt.
The memories of the great and good of old
We cherished more than misers do their gold.
'Twas more than joy to lie in mossy nook,
Inspired by tales of some heroic book;
To read of wrongs redressed, or victories won,
By Tell, by Wallace, or by Wellington!

Then was bright honour brighter in our eyes
Than sweet applause or public pageantries;
Then was the heart a liberal, and the hand
Did with celerity the heart's command;
The tongue breathe out the impulse of the mind—
To every sequence of such virtue blind:

The lowest stool in heaven, we knew full well,
Was higher than the sovereign seat of hell :
Then through all climes, or fabulous, or true,
Imagination like an eagle flew :
Above the perturbations of the world,
Above old ocean's awful voices whirl'd,
Finding new empires in the solar deeps
Where the white surge of stars for ever sweeps,
Where, wrapt in dream or heaven-descended trance,
We saw the glorious phantoms of Romance !

A blissful time ! at which old men may smile ;
Yet which *our* hearts with ease can reconcile
With even the hard realities of truth,
Which bloom with verdure in the flush of youth,
And the strong years, with unrepousing feet,
Bare to the thunder and the seething sleet.
The vision dims, and Fable's silver rime
Is melted by the advancing sun of time ;
And mist, enlarging all things to men's eyes,
Is scared by knowledge to the morning skies,
By which the great is lessen'd, and the less
Grows into glory and true loveliness !
Yet not because her garment has grown sere
Is man's first dream less potent or less dear ;
Ah ! like a lover of extremest youth,
It charms—an angel still—though only truth :
Still goes a shape before his searching eye,
Clad in the midnight folds of mystery,
Which, with imperial hand, doth wave him on

To life or death, to hunger or a throne.
But youth anticipates no overthrow ;
The waves of conquest onward ever flow ;
The banners of young lustihood are wrought
By heavenly hands ; and every new-born thought,
Conceived within the hollow of his brain,
Like a white constellation, shines amain,
And lends a glory to his widening state,
Which mightiest monarchs cannot emulate !

Ah ! Julian, these are misty lines, indeed—
The golden-edged shadows of a creed
Which, nor the actions, nor the thoughts of man
Could limit to one common, earthy span,
When life lay unexplored : What is it now,
When other years have lit upon our brow,
Causing a shade ? That creed so large and tender
Is swallow'd by an ever-deepening splendour,
Mild, yet encompassing, and greater far
Than the bright fervour of the golden star
That shook her tresses o'er our waking trance,
And led us through the meads of young Romance.
Much have we learned : despising not the dreams
That dawned upon us on the morning streams,
We yet have found, mid mickle toil and strife,
The common are the sweetest joys of life ;
That dreams and wonders lie not far away,
But in the trampled dust of common day !

THE SPINNING MAIDEN.

O THE sweet sound ! I know it well ;
It draws me like a heavenly spell :
My lady spins, and with her wheel
My soul is charmed, my senses reel :
And all the world doth change its hue ;
The very blossoms bloom anew.
I pause, I listen, I adore :
O maiden, spin for evermore !

Ah, still she spins—my lady spins,
And vanished are my fears and sins ;
For now she sings a wondrous song,
Whose music, sweet, and pure, and strong,
Seems drawn by some diviner art
From the new heaven within my heart :
I pause, I listen, I adore :
O maiden, sing for evermore !

See what a light is in her eye,
Where beauty dwells with chastity !
And see how truth has crowned her brow,
Unwrinkled by a broken vow !
And hear how, from her rosy mouth,
Warble the song-birds of the south !
I pause, I listen, I adore :
O maiden, bloom for evermore !

My lady spins, and sings, and blooms
For me,—yet all the world illumes.
She listens, dreamlike,—can she guess
That I behold her loveliness?
Some vision charms her,—can it be
Our honeymoon beyond the sea?
With very love my heart is sore :
O maiden, maiden, spin no more !

BABE HELEN.

SOME call you Nellie; others Nell;
I call you Helen; that to me
Sounds sweeter than a fairy bell
Rung by the fairies when they see
A fairy babe they would possess,
And take her by the fairy hand,
And wile her fairy loveliness
To light anew their fairyland.

But white Titania, the Queen,
If she beheld your fairy grace,
Would rather far you were not seen
By her Lord Oberon, face to face.
So she would send you back to earth,
Right fairy-quick, still fairy-fine
With all your wealth of fairy mirth,
Sweeter by far than fairy wine.

Ah, we should light the festal fire
To welcome home your fairy eyes ;
And I, your silver-haired grandsire,
Would sing you songs in minstrel-wise.
Yea, every lad would shout for joy :
“Hail, lovely Helen ! Rose of peace !
Fairer than she who ruined Troy,
And stained the golden blood of Greece !”

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